

Voice of Baptists

"The Voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."
Isaiah 40:3

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TRUE FELLOWSHIP

By Kenneth W. Massey

***"...AND TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER,
AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST."***
1 John 1:3b

The word "fellowship" is used seventeen times in the Scriptures with six different Greek words applied. It is our aim in this instance to primarily refer to that fellowship as translated from the Greek word "koinonia," meaning communion. It should be noted that not a single one of these seventeen usages of the word "fellowship" have a primary reference to communion, partnership nor joint affairs between churches.

BEGINNING OF FELLOWSHIP

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship (koinonia) of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

The Apostle Paul is assuring the members of the local, visible church at Corinth of God's mindfulness of them and His promise to claim them at the last day because of their fellowship with His Son.

Notice these words of Paul to the Thessalonians, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13) The person meeting the terms of the gospel was chosen by God to obtain forgiveness of sin and fellowship divine with God, the Father; God the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. Through the Sinbearer (Christ), we have already

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THE GREAT MISTAKES

By W. R. Overton
Madison, Tenn.

"THEREFORE WE OUGHT TO GIVE THE MORE EARNEST HEED TO THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE HEARD, LEST AT ANY TIME WE SHOULD LET THEM SLIP....WHICH AT THE FIRST BEGAN TO BE SPOKEN BY THE LORD."
Hebrews 2:1&3b

The very first communication between God and man, as we all know, took place in the garden of Eden. God told man what he could do, and what he could not do (Gen. 2:16, 17). The Curse was then passed upon the earth because of disobedience; first the serpent, next the woman and then the man (Gen. 3:14-17). Then from Adam to Noah they multiplied on the face of the earth (Gen. 6:1). The Lord saw their wickedness and it repented him that he had made man (Gen. 6:6). Yet he had given them a warning (Gen. 6:3).

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8) and because Noah listened to and followed the Voice of God, God established his covenant with him (Gen. 6:18). So the Antediluvian world made the great mistake by not heeding to the Voice of God. Ham, one of Noah's three sons, made a great mistake by looking upon his father's nakedness,

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THE PREACHER

By F. W. Lambert
Westmoreland, Tenn.



The following questions are some which vitally concern us. Why are some preachers able to lead a church over all obstacles and overcome every church difficulty? Why are preachers able to resist the devil and his nasty sins, and keep their souls unseared in the world? How can a preacher be unselfish in a selfish world? What enables a pastor to endure the persecution of his enemies and keep himself calm and collected? Where lies the pathway to power and influence in the church and community? These victories are chiseled out in the inner sanctum of the preacher's soul also. God doesn't dish out such blessings on a silver platter to just any man. If a man is willing to meet God in this Holy of Holies and stay there long enough, he comes forth with the goods for the hour. No man who tarries with his God long enough, comes away unprepared for life's eventualities. Closet thinking and prayer shall be rewarded with public victories. It isn't what he has that counts so much, but how he uses it. The man who spends much time in his Holy of Holies with his master is going out to gain many victories in his life. The price of success is paid in secret where there is no human glamour and worldly praise.

God doesn't call a man to be a minister without providing channels of power for the man who will seek until he finds. The man in the pulpit is the mirror and image of the man in the closet. Some men spend enough time with God to get a smattering, and then hurl the smattering at the congregation on Sunday morning. When the congregation balks and refuses

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VOICE OF BAPTISTS

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THE PREACHER

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to accept the smattering, then the preacher sulks in despair because they will not cooperate and follow his leadership. Many pastors receive green persimmons from the people because they try to feed green persimmons to the people. We sometimes pull our plans before they are ripe. A man can't court evil in his dreams and flirt with sinful thoughts without reaping what he sows. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he". We are made or unmade in the inner sanctum. The minister is a fool who would try to keep a church without keeping his own heart. A minister should guard his inner sanctum with the same diligent care and caution that Uncle Sam guards Fort Knox. Discipline your thinking with your very life, because it is your life. No man can rise higher without than he has become within. If by God's grace you are a preacher in the Baptist Church, you have had handed to you a glorious heritage, made sacred by the price paid by those who were "faithful unto death". In the providence of God, I am a Baptist and am convinced that our Baptists are preaching the gospel message in its purest form. In John's message to the churches in the book of Revelation, after listing the virtues of those churches, he threw sand in their eyes with this expression, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee", so we come to look at some of the dangerous trends in our ranks, and in seven churches of Revelation. Ephesus had left her first love. Smyrna was poor and yet rich. Pergamos had Satan's seat, one member killed where Satan dwelleth, one had a woman teacher that caused trouble. Sardis was dead. Laodicea was neither cold nor hot. Some churches will

authorize committees to do jobs, and then pick the committee apart, man by man, if they do not please everybody in the church. Many of the members and preachers who are not interested enough to share in the doing of a task are the first to shout "dictator" at the man who performs the task. Any group which has a dictator (be it church or nation) can lay the blame at its own feet. A dictator is made by the people under him. One simple remedy is for both leaders and followers to insist on the distribution of responsibility and the sharing of authority as far as it is possible. You can afford to be desperately afraid of the leadership of the man who is afraid of the decisions made by the majority of the members. Many preachers are afraid to speak their convictions in controversial issues because they may need the assistance of men on both sides to help in finding a new church when their kettles boil over. A multitude of preachers are not big enough guns to disagree and "get-by" without both of the opposing factions. Preachers, the God who called you into the ministry is still in the business of placing his preachers. A preacher must be able to say with a clear conscience with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content". Phil. 4:11 Here is a place for preachers to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves".

Blabber-mouths do little more than stir the garbage. We need to do more and talk less, love more and hate less, pray more and politize less, and use more brains and less brass. Keep yourself obligated only to God. Confession of sin is of little value without repentance. Let us be champions of improvements, watchdogs of the faith, and true soldiers of the cross. Keep yourself obligated only to God. Obligations can become millstones around a preacher's neck. Depend on the Lord to guide you; he makes no mistakes. Go to bat and fight like a Trojan if you must, but keep it on a Christian level. "Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14 The fact that a fairly good sized congregation keeps coming to hear you preach may not mean that your preaching is so good.

This of course, is usually accepted as evidence that a man is a good preacher. Which may be true, but is not always true. It may mean that they are determined to endure to the end. You know, there are many Christians who will support the church services, regardless of the preaching. A preacher would write me and say, "I was not giving the people what they needed." If they don't get anything out of my preaching, they keep coming back. It may mean that they are

faithful and keep coming back, hoping they will be rewarded and get something worthwhile after while. I sometimes wonder if we preachers would be as faithful as we are, if we were on the receiving end of our sermons instead of on the delivering end. It may mean that they are coming in the hope and with a prayer that there will soon be a change of pastors. Surely, we have the most urgent message man ever knew. How can we deliver it as if it were a common thing? There is fire and power in what preachers have to preach. Why quench it? We have something to get excited about. Motion toward God stirs the emotions of those on their way to God. We do have something to cry about, shout about, and something to arouse the entire world. A preacher may go to seed in his preaching; some people call it "getting into a rut". An oft-travelled road in a sandy country will have deep ruts cut into it by the wheels of the vehicles, making it almost impossible for an automobile to leave the ruts. Preachers may travel the same pathway so often in their preaching that this thing happens to their ministry. God's preachers should present a balanced diet to God's followers. Christ did! Can we afford to do less? The complete need of the whole man should be met by the man in the pulpit, and the needs of all types of men will be met. Social sins of the day are taking their toll in our churches. A few preachers major on these social sins in the pulpit. Yes, these sins need some of our attention, but do not merit all of our time. The Bible is our guide and textbook. We can never explore the depths. We have room to explore: as much as a tadpole would have in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Time to go campaigns" are often launched by minority groups in the church who want a new pastor. Petitions are sometimes circulated among the membership not in hope that a majority of the members will sign, but in hope that the mere fact will scare a resignation out of the pastor. Such groups frequently pull out and organize new churches. Anything can happen to a pastor in these circumstances. He may make a fool of himself by becoming a whimpering cry-baby, or by becoming a club-swinging person. He may run like Elijah, or he may be cast out like Paul. He may stay and be crucified, or flee into another hornet's nest. Only God can save or lead his surrendered servants under such circumstances. Not all preachers face these experiences; some move on before they are in the torture chamber. Many leave happy and delightful pastorates because God wills it and another church wants the man. Some churches seek the man, while some men seek the church. Surely the most reliable

friend in this time of need is the one who called you into his service. Prayer is the most reliable procedure to follow when the time comes to move. If God and prayer can't move you, or get the church you desire for yourself, you would do well to rest in peace where you are. Trouble in the church is not a legitimate reason for a man to seek another church. When there is trouble in the church, the pastor is usually involved. God's men are called to conquer trouble, not to run away and leave it for another pastor to face. If Jesus had followed this policy, he would have walked out on the twelve. Sooner or later trouble comes to most every church. The devil will see to that! Ambassadors for the King have urgent messages of great importance, and those messages should not be handled as if the messenger were about to go to sleep. There is life in Christ, power in the Word, comfort in the Holy Spirit, grace in God's love, salvation in the blood, hope in death, eternal life in God.

There is eternal death in rejection, no hope outside Christ, chastisement in disobedience, suffering in sin, agony in hell. How can men handle these truths in their sermons as if they were talking about the weather? If preachers fail to feed the people, they will want a change. Some of the preachers like to think the church is at fault if they want us to move. Did you ever know one who didn't? If you find yourself a victim of these circumstances, roll up your sleeves, get on your knees, and learn how to live with Jezebel and Judas. Outthink, outpray, outlive, and outwork them!! The flashy personality in a revival might not be so flashy to the church if they had to face him every Sunday in the year. That wonderful visitor who preached on Sunday might not be so wonderful if the church really knew him.

TRUE FELLOWSHIP (Cont'd.)

been viewed by God as blameless to the end. That assures God's children of eternal fellowship around the throne supernatural.

BROTHERLY FELLOWSHIP

"...we have fellowship (koinonia) one with another" (1 John 1:7).

We have already considered the fact that our first and greatest of all fellowship, and that which affords the opportunity of real lasting fellowship, comes to us by the salvation of our souls thru the power of God. The redeemed aggregate of God in this present world should be most holily united in the bonds of christian love and brotherly affection. It is vital to the progress of a local church that

unity reigns among the membership. If you don't believe it, just let Brother A and Brother B allow a difference to become noticeable in the church for whatever hairsplitting reason, and if continued long enough without correction, the church will become two parties. If the line is sharply drawn, the spirituality of the church will die, and her power will disappear.

In Galatians 2, after James, Peter and John had given to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, it wasn't long until Paul was in Antioch withstanding Peter to his face. Peter was eating with the Gentiles until some of the brethren from Jerusalem came, and then he withdrew from them, even though God had put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles purifying their (Gentiles) hearts by faith. Peter knew what was right. He had stood at Jerusalem, addressing the council of apostles and elders including Paul and Barnabas, and boldly declared that God had sent the gospel to the Gentiles. Now we see his weakness in the presence of these prejudiced Jews, causing him to act hypocritical (dissimulation). Peter was not the last preacher to play both ends against the middle trying to maintain fellowship with men. Thanks to Paul, who had nothing personal to gain from his confrontation and valid charge against Peter, the great door to all Gentiles (was kept open and perhaps millions have entered into the joys of salvation as a result.

That example should teach us the dangers of fearing men rather than God, or seeking fellowship in traditions of men rather than principles of truth. Do what you think is pleasing and right in the sight of God until convinced you are wrong (and you will be sooner or later). Then, admit your error and align yourself with truth. True fellowship will be found in a mutual love for principles of God's word with a few here and there, until death or the end of the world stills our lives.

FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN CHURCHES

This topic has been over-emphasized and placed at the top of the list, concerning the subject of fellowship, far too often. Every church, every preacher, and every individual church member should seek the approval of God in all their actions. We are saved by God, kept by God, servants of God, on a mission for God in prospect of living with God in the after awhile.

The fellowship within a local church should never be jeopardized by trying to duplicate the policies of another church. Remember, your church is under no

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GREAT MISTAKES (Cont'd.)

and when Noah awoke from his wine he knew what his younger son had done. A curse was placed upon him, and he would his two brothers and their generations throughout all time (Gen. 9:25, 28).

The people then made a great mistake when they gathered together in a land called Shinar and began to say one to another, "let us build a tower that will reach to heaven." God saw what they were doing and since he had already provided for man the means or transportation essential to take him to heaven, he went down and confounded their language so they could not even understand each other (Gen. 11:7).

Lot made a great mistake when he made choice of the plains of Jordan with the wickedness of Sodom (Gen. 13:10, 11). God said for Lot, his wife and their daughters to leave Sodom not looking back, but Lot's wife disobeyed the Voice of God and looked back (Gen. 19:26).

Aaron made a bad mistake when he rebelled against the Word of the Lord at the water of Meribah (Num. 20:24). He lost his life in Mt. Hor.

Moses made a mistake when he failed to glorify God by speaking to the rock as God had commanded. Moses lost his life near the plains of Moab in the mountain of Nebo (Deut. 34:1, 4).

Saul made a great mistake when he failed to carry out the order of God to destroy all the Amalekites, and then lied to Samuel about it. "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (1 Sam. 15:22).

A great mistake was made when David was moving the Laws of God (Ark of the Covenant) from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. As Uzzah and Ahio were driving the new cart containing the ark and having come to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and there he died by the ark of God (2 Sam. 6:1-6).

David made a great mistake when he sent servants to bring Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite, to the king's house. After Bathsheba told David that she was with child, David tried many ways to get Uriah to go down to his own house so it would cover up for him, but Uriah would not go and David had to think of some other way (which was murder Uriah) (2 Sam. 11:1-15). In the twelfth chapter of 2 Samuel, a man named Nathan came to David and told

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TRUE FELLOWSHIP

direct command to either accept or reject the fellowship of another church, in order to keep its sovereign and autonomous authority, but must continue to carry out the commission of Christ to maintain that great privilege. Each local church is so much a complete and independent church, that no other organization can add to nor detract from her inalienable power received at the hands of God.

An old Chinese proverb teaches that you may determine a fraction of difference, unseen to the eye, by extending the matter a lengthy distance. The farther you extend two lines which are slightly incongruous to each other, the greater the gap becomes obvious. When your church worships, who is the object? When your church is led in the paths of righteousness, who is the leader? As your church needs convicting power toward sinners, who do you beckon? If your church made a great mistake, to whom would you repent? Where does your church find the greatest blessings? To whom will the church kingdom be delivered? Doesn't this nature of reasoning show us the importance of **fellowship** with God? "O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever" (Psalms 117).

FELLOWSHIP IN HEAVEN

"For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from hence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

What will it be when we get over yonder, and join the throne where the ultimate of fellowship shall be ours to enjoy forever? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

First, we can't know all now, but we can know in part. John said, "for the former things are passed away, Behold, I make all things new." No discussion of earthly troubles, trials or broken fellowship will be entertained inside the gates of that long home. God shall be all in all. We shall know then as much about ourselves as God knows about us now.

So when the devil beguiled Eve with the prospect of "being like God," little did he know that God would eventually enable us to be just that. Not God mind you, but like God. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15). Oh, the indescribable thoughts of being a perfect man, in a perfect home, with a perfect Guardian will surely mean Perfect Fellowship.

SPRING REVIVALS

MAY 13

GRACE MISS. BAPTIST CHURCH - 9835 Hayes, Detroit, Mich. Elder L. W. Smith of Goodlettsville, Tenn. will be the evangelist. Elder Charles R. Moore is pastor of the church. **EVERYONE WELCOME!**

MAY 13

KOKOMO MISS. BAPTIST CHURCH - 1723 Lindsey St., Kokomo, Ind. Elder Billy L. Moran of Indpls. will serve as evangelist. Elder Mitchell Smith pastors the church. Services each evening at 7 p.m. A cordial welcome is extended to everyone.

MAY 13

GRACE MISS. BAPTIST CHURCH - Lantern Rd., Fishers, Ind. Elder Lewis Holland is the evangelist and Elder John A. Keen, Jr. is pastor of Grace Church. **YOU are welcome!** Services begin at 6 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. Mon.-Sat. nights.

FELLOWSHIP MEETING

Southside Miss. Baptist Church of 1850 E. Summer Ave., Indpls. will entertain at the second quarter Bethel Association Fellowship Meeting for 1979, Saturday evening, May 5th at 7 p.m. Bro. Lawrence Patterson, member of Drakes Creek Miss. Baptist Church of Simpson Co., Ky. will be the guest speaker. The pastor, Elder Marvin Emberton, and the members of Southside Church extend a warm welcome to everyone to come for the service and an hour of fellowship and refreshments beginning at 6 p.m. Special singing will be provided by the Parables of Indianapolis.

CLEVELAND BAPTIST MISSION

Elder Darrell E. Hicks has recently begun holding mission services at 170 Church Street, Cleveland, Tenn. He is preaching each Sunday at 2 p.m. Please notify your friends and relatives in the area that their visits would be most welcome. Pray for this mission endeavor and all missions.

GREAT MISTAKES

him of his sin. David thought this thing had been kept secret, but God knew and told him that the sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam. 12:10).

Jonah made a great mistake when he refused to go to Nineveh. However, he became willing and some feel that he was one of the first foreign missionaries. Most of the time the emphasis is placed on the big fish that swallowed him and Christ uses this illustration in speaking of his own death, burial and resurrection (Matt. 12:38, 42). The book of Jonah is full of the supernatural; aside from the great fish, there is the gourd, the worm, the east wind, and, I suppose the greatest of all, the repentance of the people of Nineveh.

Paul spoke to the owner and shipmaster on their voyage to Italy, but they refused to hear the word of the Lord spoken by this man of God, and had to suffer loss (Acts 27:10). Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives by lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1, 10). All of the greatest mistakes made by any of God's creation has been their refusal to hear and obey the Voice of God.