

FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST

1. Paul and the Jerusalem Congregation - Ac 9:26-28

- A. Irony: Paul's own people in Damascus are trying to kill him and those he came to apprehend help him escape. Seeks now to join those in Jerusalem he formerly persecuted.
- B. Reaction of the disciples:
 - 1. Fear - Remembering his treachery and violence.
 - 2. Doubt - Did not believe he was a genuine disciple.
 - 3. A real problem: It is not always easy to know when and to whom we must extend fellowship.
- C. Fellowship is established by the mediating work of Barnabas and belief in Paul's testimony regarding his conversion and his repentance (preaching in Damascus).

2. Fellowship Among Brethren

- A. All those "in Christ" necessarily in fellowship with one another.
 - 1. Same conditions of entry apply equally to all.
 - 2. We have no say as to who enters a relationship with Christ. Some in Jerusalem (those who suffered at Paul's hands) may not have approved.
 - 3. When is someone in fellowship with God? When they obey the conditions from a genuine, sincere, faithful heart.
- B. How do we **know** when someone is in fellowship with God or not?
 - 1. We can determine whether someone has physically complied by observation, personal admission, references of others.
 - 2. The sincerity of heart cannot be determined by outsiders.
 - 3. We teach what the Bible says and we bound by the conscientious admission of the person in question.
- C. When we have determined to the best of our ability that someone has done what the Lord asks of them, we are in fellowship with that person whether we acknowledge it or not. **We must take care neither to extend fellowship where**

it does not exist or withhold it where it does exist.

3. Fellowship and the Local Church

- A. The Bible enjoins Christians to seek out, work and worship with others of faith. Many hold that they can be good Christians and never associate with others and never worship corporately.
- B. The voluntary association of brethren to discharge “together” (corporate) activities constitutes a “local church.”
 - 1. Ac 2:41-42 - A developing collection of people engaged in spiritual activity.
 - 2. Ac 2:44-47 - Not just formal or forced association but glad sharing growing from the shared spiritual blessings. See Ac 4:32 - “one heart and one soul.”
 - 3. Ac 5:11 - “Great fear came upon all the **church.**”
 - 4. Ac 5:14 - Believers added unto the Lord, by the Lord Himself (Ac 2:47).
 - 5. Ac 8:1, 3; 11:22 - The **church at** Jerusalem.
 - 6. Ac 11:26 - Assembled with the church at Antioch.
- C. The same process by which one enters a relationship with Christ qualifies him for acceptance by the local church. There are no additional requirements to be met.

Conclusion: We have a great blessing in our associations with others of like faith. Let us cherish and nurture these relationships, for they are **God’s people** and our **brethren.**