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He served. How gloriously He fulfilled, to the last jot and tittle, the will of God enshrined in the volume of the Book.

So that the story of Hagar's flight and Hagar's return highlights this basic principle that divine service can only be rendered for God's highest glory if the servant's gaze is fixed, not on seeming results, but on his unseen Master. We follow Him Who was at once the Author and the Herald of the message given to Hagar, and we must needs fulfil our commission after His pattern, whether the results seem short-lived or of long duration.

THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IN PHILIPPI

Whatever we may think of present attempts in various quarters to bring about "Church Unity", no student of the N.T. can fail to understand and acknowledge that the concept of fellowship within the Body of which Christ is Head and Lord is of fundamental importance. It was that for which the Lord Himself prayed ere He went to the cross to lay the foundation upon which "*The Fellowship*" could be made possible thereafter: "I pray . . . that they (all true believers) may be one, even as We are One . . . that they may be perfected into one" (Jn. 17:31-23 R.V.).

There are certain cardinal points which require elucidation, however, if we are to get the Biblical meaning of fellowship rightly. For example, we must be clear that fellowship (or unity) amongst members of Christ's Body is primarily spiritual, and not outward and ecclesiastical. The latter is always inadequate as a full expression of fellowship—as history and experience have abundantly proved. The late Dr. Griffith Thomas put this very clearly in one of his writings: "The church is a congregation not an aggregation. It is a community of those who have Christ for their Source and Centre of life and unity. This unity is not to be confused with unanimity of opinion on every point. Nor is unity to be identified with uniformity of usages and forms of worship. Unity means life, uniformity often means deadness. Nor is it to be limited to a unit of organization. That is an absolute impossibility, remembering differences of time, place, nations, and races in the Church. True unity can exist and flourish without absolute uniformity of opinion and custom, or without needing a unity of organization, because it is a unity of life, nature, teaching, and purpose in Christ."

A second point is the danger secreted in the boast often made by some well-meaning souls, "I belong to no church". If this is to be interpreted as belonging to no "denomination", or "sect", well and good. But if, as is often the case, it means a "free lance", unattached to any body of true Christians, it is a twofold evil—it is selfishness on the one hand, and a denial of the *unity* of the Body on the other, for it fails to appreciate or appropriate in practice the *corporate testimony* which the N.T. envisages for the Church's life. Here again the pertinent remarks of Dr. Griffith Thomas are helpful: "Herein lies the importance of the church to the individual. Individualistic Christianity is a contradiction and an impossibility. Justification comes alone; sanctification in connection with others. Christian character needs the assembly for development; *character* is only possible in the Christian community. So that Christianity properly and fully realized necessitates a community of Christians. Individualism is against the N.T. idea of Christianity, for unattached Christians are not found in the New Testament." Believers are exhorted to remember "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25). Paul prayed that the Christians of Ephesus might comprehend "with all saints", the love of Christ (Eph. 3:18), each saint apprehending a little, and all together comprehending that which is intended for the whole church.

It is to Paul's Letters, principally, we turn for a real insight into the meaning and measure of fellowship both in doctrine and in practice. For example, his Letter to the church in Philippi is replete with the sense and sanctity of fellowship as he conceived it in actual practice. He opens his whole soul in love, appreciation, and gratitude; and in doing so he presses home some of the greatest lessons on the subject, and worthy the closest study. The reason for this would appear to have been the presence of a rising party-spirit in the assembly due to the personal differences between two women of the company, Euodia and Syntache, who were prominent in service of the Gospel (ch. 4:2). He may have felt more keenly this state of affairs because he himself had laboured with these women and others of the Christians in the Gospel with much acceptance. (See notes on Ch. 4:2, 3 later).

For our present study we shall confine attention to the actual Greek words used by the apostle in developing his theme of fellowship in the church: They are far more expressive than their English equivalents usually reveal.

I. The word "fellowship" is *κοινωνία*, and it occurs only three times in the epistle, but always impressively; moving from the outer circumference of public testimony to the very centre of spiritual experience. After his opening salutation, he breaks out into thanksgiving to God for their "fellowship in the Gospel", which he never ceases to do "in every supplication" he makes to God on their behalf (1:3-5). This fellowship *in service* is something most stimulating and encouraging wherever it is manifested, as many a missionary in some foreign land could testify. It is unlikely that the saints in Philippi, had actually been with the apostle when he was thus serving the Lord, but they had had a deep prayer-fellowship with him, and they had further demonstrated that fellowship by sending him a gift—as we gather from ch. 4: 10, 14, 15, 17. It was for fellowship thus expressed practically that he continually thanked God.

Its *second* occurrence, in ch. 2:1, would indicate the *source* and *quality* of their fellowship—"the fellowship of the Spirit". The phrase may imply here either a 'participation' in the one and self-same Spirit, or the true fellowship which the Spirit imparts to all believers. In either case it is indicative of the 'sphere' in which fellowship originates and is maintained—"in the Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14).

The *third* occurrence (ch. 3:10) is, in a sense, the most remarkable—we might almost say, profound: "The fellowship of *His sufferings*". Here the apostle seems to introduce us into "the partnership" of the cross-sufferings of Christ; not, of course, redemptively, but as being identified with Christ in the reproaches of a world which scorns the cross and all it implies (see Heb. 12:2). Moule's comment is worth giving in full: Paul "implies that this cross-bearing, whatever its special form, this acceptance of affliction of any sort as for and from Him, is a deep secret of entrance into spiritual intimacy with Christ." (Cf. 2 Cor. 1:5-7; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:13.)

But the clause does not end there; it goes deeper still if possible: "Becoming conformed (*summorphizesthei*) into His death" (the pres. part. = a continual process of growing conformity). The only point we can stop to make now is the fact of a 'fellowship' even here (as indicated by the verb being compounded with *σύν*). "Whilst we can have no partnership in the vicarious sufferings of Christ as a propitiation for sin, we can have a very real share

in the meaning and results of that, His precious death" (T. Walker). Also note the substantive in verse 21, where the same Lord is seen "fashioning anew the body of our humiliation that *it may be conformed (summorphon)* to the body of His glory". There again is the idea of 'fellowship'; the "sharing" of the present leads on to the "sharing" of the perfect and eternal consummation!

II. This brings us to the main part of the subject of fellowship, as discovered in the prominent compound words used to express the concept. There are at least *nine* Greek terms used, all compounded from the preposition *sūn* (= 'with'), indicating an intimate and personal fellowship between those whom he addresses as we see from the above example. Of this number three occur twice, and one in three different forms.

(1) Ch. 1:7 = *sun̄koinōnos*. "Ye all are *fellow-partakers* with me in this grace." This refers to the service of the Gospel, which he mentions seven times in this one chapter and twice more in the Epistle. The cognate verb, *sun̄koinōneō* occurs in ch. 4:14 (see above), where the apostle acknowledges the practical demonstration of this fellowship and sympathy.

(2) Ch. 1:27 = *sun̄athleō*; "with one soul *striving together* for the faith of the Gospel". The verb occurs again in 4:3, where it is more personal = "*with me*"; but here it includes the wider group of believers to whom he was writing. It has the idea of an athletic contest, striving to win the prize. (See 2 Tim. 2:5, R.V. where the simple verb occurs.) The true evangelist is a 'wrestler' for souls, but how greatly he needs the fellowship of kindred spirits (Rom. 13:30, R.V.).

(3) Ch. 2:2 = *sun̄psuchos*, literally "fellow-spirits", or "*like-souled*". Some would join this with the next phrase, "of one mind", and render it, "with harmony of soul cherishing the one sentiment" (Vincent). Here indeed is spiritual intimacy, conducive to the highest fellowship.

Two other almost identical phrases occur, one in the verse dealt with above, ch. 1:27, *mīa pseuchē* = 'one-souled' (R.V.); the other in ch. 2:20, *iso-pseuchon* = 'equal-souled' (R.V. "like-minded").* Placing them together we might read the three,

* The phrase occurs again only in the Sept. of Ps. 55: 13, "it was thou, *mine equal*."

"*oneness, likeness, and equality* of fellowship in intention and purpose."

(4) Ch. 2:17, 18 = *sunchairō* (also spelt *sugchairō*). "I rejoice with you all" (v. 17); "ye rejoice with me" (v. 18). Strange context indeed for the spirit of exulting joy, and that spirit to be *shared* with fellow saints and the martyr-victim himself! Paul might be willing enough to pour out his life's blood for the sacred cause of the Christ he loved; he might (as others since) be enabled to triumph with joy in suffering thus: But to summon others to *rejoice with him* in the prospect—that is a fellowship transcending imagination! Yet, that IS Christ's fellowship! (The same word occurs again in 1 Cor. 12:26; 13:6.)

(5) Ch. 2:25. In this verse there are two words—*sunergos*, fellow-workers; and *sunstratiotēs*, "fellow-soldiers". They refer to Epaphroditus. Paul calls him, "my brother, and fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier", etc., regarding which Lightfoot remarks, "the three words are arranged in an ascending scale of common *sympathy*, common *work*, and common *danger* and toil and suffering" in the service of the *one* Master. Does not this day of danger and degeneration call aloud for such "fellow-heroes" against a common Enemy?

(6) Ch. 4:3, contains no less than four of these fellowship-words, two of which have already been considered (*sunathleō* in 1:27; *sunergos* in 2:25), so we need only to look at the others. "I beseech thee *true yoke fellow* (*gnēsie sunzuge*). The pictorial meaning is clear. Whoever the person may have been, he was Paul's "ploughing-companion"! They exerted their joint energies in ploughing up the hard soil of men's souls in order to sow the Good Seed of the Word. Some students have thought that *sunzuge* is really a proper name, and the adjective 'true' marks the person addressed as one to whom the name is justly applied = "Synzygus, who art rightly so named" (Vincent). It is impossible to say with certainty, though wonderfully suggestive.

The second word in this verse is, "help (*sunlambanou*) these women" (i.e. Syntyche and Euodia, v. 2). It literally is, "take hold, *with these women*, the burden". This might be a general exhortation, "interest yourself in them and their work"; but there is also something to be said in favour of, "help them in getting rid of the burden of their differences." In any case, they were to be helped by personal conference and exhortation and prayer—

this would be a real "helping with the burden". How greatly needed today are such helpers and burden-bearers in every part of the Lord's work! The next verb is the same as in 1:27, *sunēthlēsan*, "they laboured (or strove) with me" (see notes above).

(7) But we cannot fully appreciate the apostle's exhortation in verse 3 without some reference to verse 2, where he is addressing the two sisters themselves. We have already pointed out the contention in which both were involved, which called forth the appeals in ch. 2:1-4 generally, and the more personal one here. What we are to focus attention on now is the wording of the latter appeal, which the R.V. renders more accurately, "I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche (note the repetition "I exhort", to emphasise the personal appeal to each of them), to be of the same mind in the Lord". It is not so much "to think alike" (as A.V.), but to be "like minded" in the general disposition of their wills and spirits. We may not always see "eye to eye", but there needs to be agreement of mind on principles, and a disposition to fellowship to the utmost limits. There is a profound relation between "same-minded-ness" and "one-souled" (1:27, see notes above). Here is the real *sphere* of *koinonia*—fellowship.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find how frequently the apostle uses the same verb, *phroneō* (= "to be minded"; "to mind") in this epistle, 12 times in fact, and more than in any other epistle. All these occurrences have to do, directly or indirectly, with the subject of fellowship. But the outstanding reference surely is found in ch. 2:5, "have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"—and do not omit the following verses, for they display the quality of mind and the humility of mind which is the secret of fellowship. This is not mere coincidence, but a direct evidence of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the matter of Christian fellowship within the assemblies of true believers.

(8) The last of the fellowship-words (designedly last in this study) is in ch. 3:17. It would seem in the nature of a climax, a daring climax in fact, in a strangely moving argument all through for the supremacy of fellowship in assembly-life in the midst of a world of clashing self-interests. It is even a personal challenge: "Brethren, be ye *imitators-together* (*sunmimētai*) of me" (R.V.). Vincent renders it: "be ye unitedly imitators of me"; and Lightfoot even more forcefully, "vie with each other in imitating me"! It is not the only place where a similar challenge is made (see

ch. 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1, etc.). Here the whole emphasis is on the *fellowship* involved in the action. And if we couple with this his similar appeals in the Corinthian passages we shall see something of his own standard of purpose and ambition: "Be ye imitators of me, *even as I am of Christ*." Therefore what he is actually challenging us to do is to imitate in daily living the Christ of God Himself, within the *companionship* of like-minded saints—who also partake of "the mind of Christ"! Imbued with that Ideal, "seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, . . . and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the File-leader and Perfecter of faith . . . that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (Heb. 12:1-3). That is FELLOWSHIP!—A.Mc.D.R.

NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Chap. 7: 11-28

The Superiority of His Priesthood to that of Aaron (*continued*)

Verses 25-28

Versè 25.—Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. A more literal rendering is, 'He has power to save.' His priesthood combines intercession and power to save. His intercession carries with it its own answer in His saving power. While all power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth, yet He pleads with the Father, and every plea is fulfilled by the Father through the Son. That He saves "to the uttermost" combines the two ideas of time and degree (the marginal rendering "completely" is good). Wherever any single child of God is in any measure of need, Christ is mighty to supply it, not merely because He intercedes, but because He ever lives to do so. His power to save is due to His unchangeable priesthood. This calls for our constant gratitude and adoration. The more we ponder this passage the more we have revealed to us what we owe to this High-Priestly ministry of the Lord.

Versè 26.—For such a high priest became us,—This introduces a summary of the perfections of the High Priesthood of Christ as already set forth in the preceding part of the Epistle. We may compare for instance, chapter 2:10. That expressed what it suited