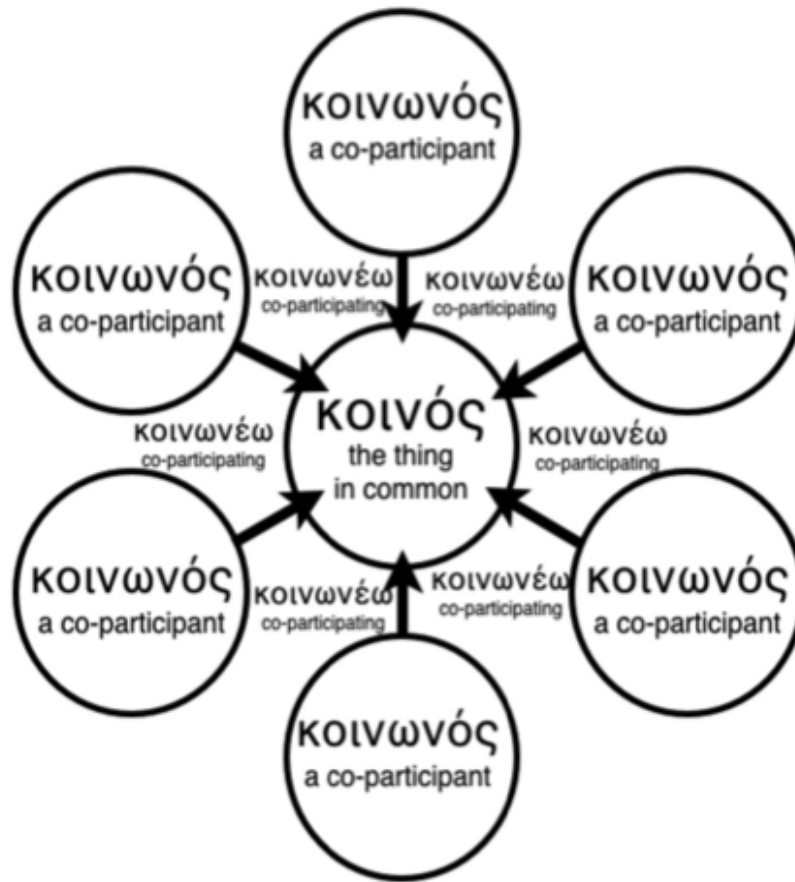


The Fellowship of the Spirit



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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotation is from the *New American Standard Bible*.

Preface

In this message we will be discussing the phrase, “**the fellowship of the Spirit**”. Actually, in 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul used the phrase, “the fellowship of the *Holy* Spirit”; whereas in Philippians 2:1, he wrote, “the fellowship of the Spirit”. The two phrases are obviously quite similar. In this case, I do not think the inclusion or exclusion of the word “holy” in any way indicates a difference between the two. In fact, as I’ve reflected and researched and reflected again on these two verses, I have found the two verses taken together present a unified concept.

Now regarding my “research” and “reflection”: One of my main approaches to Bible study is to look into the original languages. I don’t look for inspiration in the works of scholars. On the contrary, from the Scripture, I believe I receive inspiration from the Author of Scripture, that is, the Holy Spirit. Then, after first letting “scripture interpret scripture”, I also research the interpretations of scholars as another means of possibly confirming the validity of the inspiration.

In order to confirm their findings, scholars refer to other scholars who are their peers in their fields of study. I think the aspect of “peer-review” scholarship is good, but certainly not a fail-safe with regards to bias in interpretation. To maintain Biblical Christianity, academic scholarship must be subservient to the Spirit of Truth. I don’t think we have any other choice

in that matter. After all, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit, not academia, “will lead and guide us into all truth”.¹

I am certainly not a scholar of Biblical languages. But I research the work of those who are scholars of the Biblical languages, and in my messages, make references to their findings. Thus far, I have found some, but I think, relatively little, information specifically regarding “the fellowship of the Spirit”. Therefore, in an effort to understand more exactly what Paul meant in his usage of this phrase, I’ve been forced into learning for myself more about Greek grammar. It has been a challenging exercise; but one I’ve tried to do under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Where I can, I do reference scholars²; but where I can’t, I hereby “reference” the Holy Spirit.

I think the study has both confirmed and more fully clarified the insights I believe I received from the Holy Spirit regarding this phenomenon of “the fellowship of the Spirit”. The goal of this message is to look deeper into this phrase, hopefully inspiring us to pursue together with the Holy Spirit, and one another, what I have come to consider a wonderful gift of the Spirit.

¹ John 16:13

² A partial bibliography for this message: A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*; James Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*; Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*; W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*; Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*; Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament* and *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

Please note:

Contrary to what is in vogue today for some, I make no distinction between the Greek word, *ekklesia*, and its English translation, “church”. I use the two words interchangeably. When I say “church”, I mean the full and accurate biblical meaning of “ekklesia”. Simply using the Greek word, *ekklesia*, in and of itself, helps no one understand the biblical meaning. The biblical meaning will always require explanation for the unlearned. Therefore, I think the English words, “church”, or “assembly”, or “community” are adequate translations. Not everyone identifying with the word “church” is part of the Ekklesia of God. There is only one true Church made up of those who have received the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9-10) - those who “possess the Son”. (1 John 5:11-12)

Life as a Principle

Along with endeavoring to define the concept of **the fellowship of the Spirit**, I would also hope to communicate what I understand to be the essence of the biblical concept of “Church”, and that is: **Life as a Principle**. My assertion that **the fellowship of the Spirit** is the heart of “doing church” is based on the conviction that at the heart of “doing church” is a **Ministry of Life**.

Most Christians are aware of a growing world-wide phenomenon, a moving of the Spirit of God, which some see as a “new thing”³, and others like myself, see as part of a “restoration” to apostolic Christianity, which is labeled alternatively as “House Church”, “Simple Church”, or “Organic Church”. Although it has unfortunately become highly trivialized through indiscriminate use, I prefer the term “Organic Church”. The adjective “organic” refers to *a derivative of that which is living*. I write more extensively about this in other eBooks.⁴ But suffice to say here that I am using the term, “Organic Church”, in reference to **A GROUP OF DISCIPLES WHO ARE PURSUING REVELATION OF CHRIST AND RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST WITH A VIEW TO A REFLECTION OF CHRIST IN HIS BODY THROUGH RECEIVING AND SHARING THE HIS LIFE WITH ONE ANOTHER.**⁵ A scriptural phrase I associate with this concept is found in Romans 8:2: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”.

First Jesus, and later Paul the apostle, both stated: “It is the Spirit that gives life.”⁶ The fact that the Spirit gives life is inherent to **the fellowship of**

³ The practice can hardly be called “new” in that it was the practice of the apostolic church, and has been practiced continuously throughout church history by groups like the Waldensees, Anabaptists, Hutterites, Mennonites, Moravians, Plymouth Brethren, to name a few, as well as during more modern day “revivals” such as the *Jesus Movement* and the *Charismatic Renewal*.

⁴ For example: [*Christ is Prerequisite for Church, A New & Living Way: A series of Essays Investigating New Covenant Worship in Spirit & Truth, Concerning Gathering*](#), along with other Articles, eBooks, and Audio Messages posted on [our website](#), and some [paperback editions available on Amazon.com](#)

⁵ T. Austin Sparks is quoted as saying: “God’s way and law of fullness is that of organic life. In the Divine order, life produces its own organism, whether it be vegetable, animal, human or spiritual. This means that everything comes from the inside. Function, order and fruit issue from this law of life within. It was solely on this principle that what we have in the New Testament came into being. Organized Christianity has entirely reversed this order.”

⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:6; John 6:63

the Spirit. In other words, in order to understand **the fellowship of the Spirit**, we must also understand *the life of the Spirit*. So, by way of introduction, I'd like to discuss what I am going to refer to as **"Life as a Principle"**:

Jesus said: **"I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly."**⁷ God created human beings to live life in "a trinity of dimensions": physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual.

Those who are not "born of the Spirit", that is, those who are not regenerated⁸, essentially do not experience life in the spiritual dimension, which is the *source and reality* behind the physical, mental and emotional dimensions. They live life on a superficial level, unaware of the realities of the spiritual realms. John the apostle wrote: "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."⁹

When Jesus spoke of "having (life) abundantly", I believe He essentially meant **continuously receiving the spiritual life of God** from the Holy Spirit. I use the word "continuously" because of what is expressed in Jesus' saying, which He quoted from the Old Testament: **"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."**¹⁰ The

⁷ John 10:10

⁸ John 3:3-8

⁹ 1 John 5:12

¹⁰ Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3

tense of the Greek verb translated “proceeds” is the present continuous sense¹¹, implying that the Creator God is *continually* creating life by His words as He did in the beginning. The “fellowship of the Spirit” is “walking in the Spirit”, participating in the “Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus”¹², and continuously receiving His words which are “spirit and life”¹³.

The idea that Christianity is first and foremost participation in the life of the Spirit, was germane to apostolic evangelism: An angel instructed the apostles: “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”¹⁴ Participation in the life of Christ was also the clear apostolic teaching regarding what it meant to function as “the Church, which is His body”¹⁵.

“ ... We are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies¹⁶, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”¹⁷

“*What each joint supplies*” is specifically *zoe*, “the life of God”.¹⁸ So, this passage depicts a **Ministry of Life**: The life of the Body of Christ flows from

¹¹ Greek: *ekporeuomi*, Strong’s # 1607

¹² Romans 8:2

¹³ John 6:63

¹⁴ Acts 5:20

¹⁵ Ephesians 1:22-23

¹⁶ “What each joint supplies” in the Body of Christ is specifically *zoe*, “the life of God”. (Ephesians 4:18)

¹⁷ Ephesians 4:15-16

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:18

the Head to the members, with each member of the Body receiving life from the Head and sharing it with the other members of the Body. There are obviously many more details that could be discussed regarding this passage. But I believe this is the ESSENCE of church ministry and the NATURE of functioning as His Body.

Let's look further into Jesus' statement: **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."**

"It is the Spirit who gives **life....**" The Greek word that is translated "life" here is *zoe*.¹⁹ Of this word, W.E. Vine says: *"Zoe is used in the New Testament of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself. (John 5:26)"*²⁰ This is the life which the Spirit gives – the life of God, the life of Christ.²¹ The Spirit gives spiritual life. There are other dimensions of life – physical, mental/emotional, which are associated with different Greek words.²² But when we discuss "the fellowship of the Spirit", we will be discussing spiritual life - life in the Spirit. In John 4, Jesus said: "God is Spirit, and those who worship (or serve) Him, must worship in spirit and truth."²³

¹⁹ Strong's # 2222

²⁰ Most quotes regarding Greek words will be from W.E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

²¹ The triune God is One. The life of the Father God is the life of Christ and the (Holy) Spirit of life. The "God (who) is Spirit" (John 4:24) is the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Holy Spirit.

²² *Bios* (# 979) and *psuche* (# 5590) respectively. Most comments regarding Greek words will be based on W.E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

²³ John 4:24

“... the flesh profits nothing; **the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**” Jesus said that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life; but He also indicated that **the words which He speaks also give spiritual life.** This too is key to understanding the essence of “**the fellowship of the Spirit**”. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would “take of what is Mine and declare it to you”.²⁴ So, in “the fellowship of the Spirit”, the Holy Spirit shares the life-giving words of Jesus with His Body. “It is the Spirit who gives life”²⁵ – the Holy Spirit is the only One who gives the life of Christ which sustains His Body, “for in Him we live and move and have our being”²⁶. He does this through the members of Christ’s Body. How? Through “the fellowship of the Spirit”. But what is meant by this phrase, “the fellowship of the Spirit”?

Fellowship Words & Scriptures

Let’s take a look at the Greek word, “koinonia”²⁷. The English word “fellowship” is what is most often used to translate the Greek word *koinonia*. The Greek word can also be translated “partnership” or “participation”. In fact, The English Standard Version translates Philippians 2:1 as “**participation in the Spirit**”.

Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest” says the phrase “*fellowship of the Holy Spirit*” in 2 Corinthians 13:14 refers to the joint-participation of the believer and

²⁴ John 16:13-15

²⁵ John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6

²⁶ Acts 17:28

²⁷ Strong’s # 2842

the Holy Spirit in a common interest and activity in the things of God".²⁸ And regarding Philippians 2:1, he says: "*The Greek word translated 'fellowship', speaks of a common interest and a mutual and active participation in the things of God in which the believer and the Holy Spirit are joint-participants.*"²⁹

The word *koinonia*³⁰ is from the word, *koinonos*,³¹ which means an "associate", a "companion", a "partaker" or a "partner". The root of both of these words is *koinos*,³² which means "shared by all" or "common". So, another aspect of the concept of fellowship is that it is a *sharing what is held in common*. Our unity is of the Holy Spirit³³ and what we hold in common is *the life of Christ* which is given by the Holy Spirit³⁴.

Jesus encouraged us to "abide in the vine"³⁵. I believe this is a beautiful word picture for "the fellowship of the Spirit".

In his epistle, John the apostle reminds us to *abide in the Spirit of Christ*.³⁶ In fact, this fellowship was the subject matter and purpose of John's epistle:

²⁸ *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 33

²⁹ Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*.

³⁰ Strong's # 2842

³¹ Strong's # 2844

³² Strong's # 2839

³³ Ephesians 4:3

³⁴ John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6

³⁵ John 15:4, 7, 10

³⁶ 1 John 2:24, 27, 28

“1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

1 John 1:1-4

In verse 1, John uses the words “seen”, “looked at”, and “touched”. **The fellowship of the Spirit** is experiential, that is, it is experiencing God in relationship.

In verse 2, John writes the words “seen”, as well as “testify and proclaim”. These are activities in “**the fellowship of the Spirit**”. “Seeing” indicates fellowship in the Spirit. And “proclaiming” and “testifying” indicate fellowship with one another.

In verse 3, John speaks of “**fellowship with us**” and “**fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ**”. There is only one fellowship, for he says, “our fellowship is (the fellowship) with the Father and His Son”, obviously in the Spirit. I wonder if we truly realize that whenever we talk with one another, the Spirit of Christ is present with us, participating in the conversation – both listening, but also inspiring our words. If we are surrendered and sensitive, “He who searches the hearts and knows what

the mind of the Spirit is” will lead and guide what we share with one another “according to the will of God”³⁷.

I believe the following is also true: “Vertical” fellowship with the Spirit is prerequisite for authentic “horizontal” fellowship with one another. By “authentic” I mean sharing the life of the Spirit - not merely sharing from the realm of the human soul. “Horizontal” fellowship is an outflow of “vertical” fellowship.

The Fellowship of the Spirit

As I said earlier, Paul the apostle used the phrase, “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 13:14, and the phrase, “the fellowship of the Spirit” in Philippians 2:1. The same Greek words are used in both verses, but the grammatical constructions are different. There are definite articles in 2 Corinthians 13:14, so an accurate rendering would be: “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”³⁸. The definite article “the” is used to point out identity. There are no definite articles in Philippians 2:1. This called an “anathrous” construction, and is used to point out **quality**. So, an accurate rendering would be “the fellowship of Spirit”³⁹. Now, although there is no definite article pointing to the identity of the Spirit, it would not be correct to render it

³⁷ Romans 8:27

³⁸ Greek: *ho*, Strong’s # 3588

³⁹ Even when there is no definite article in the Greek text, translators will choose to insert a *the*, or an *a*, for the English idiom.

“spirit fellowship” or “spiritual fellowship”, because the Greek word *pneumatōs* is not an adjective; it is a noun. Paul could have used a definite article as he did with the Corinthians; but he didn’t. With the Philippians, he chose to not use a definite article which means that he wanted to emphasize that *the fellowship has the quality of the Spirit of God* and, while this “fellowship” is something we participate in, it is not limited to the physical, mental and emotional qualities of human beings. *This fellowship has the quality of the Spirit, who gives life.*

True fellowship does not originate in people. *True fellowship originates in the Holy Spirit. Fellowship is something He gives to us - a gift of the Spirit.* In the phrase “the fellowship of the Spirit”, the preposition “of” designates genitive case, showing possession. There are many uses of the genitive case in Greek. In commentaries, I find much variance of opinion regarding the particular uses of the genitive case in certain passages. Personally, I’m inclined to see this as a *possessive genitive* - that is, *the fellowship belongs to the Holy Spirit*. According to Kenneth Wuest, this is certainly the case in a related verse in 1 Corinthians 1:9. Wuest says: “*It is the possessive genitive here, namely, into a communion or joint-participation belonging to His Son...*”⁴⁰ I would tend to give a similar interpretation to Philippians 2:1.

But it may be *subjective genitive* – meaning the fellowship is *something the Holy Spirit is doing*. And it may also be *plenary genitive* – meaning the

⁴⁰ Wuest Word Studies: *Untranslatable Riches*, p. 98-99

fellowship is *something both we and the Holy Spirit are doing*. I'm blessed by all three possibilities!

As was stated earlier, Kenneth Wuest describes "the fellowship of the Spirit" in this way: *"A common interest and a mutual and active participation in the things of God in which the believer and the Holy Spirit are joint-participants"*.⁴¹ And we can summarize W.E. Vines comments on "the fellowship of the Spirit" in this way: *A mutual companionship between the Holy Spirit and ourselves, in which we have communion and two-way communication with the Holy Spirit as a means of partaking of the life of the Spirit*.⁴² It is "life in the Spirit", or what the Scripture refers to as "walking in the Spirit" and "praying in the Spirit"⁴³.

Fellowship is *not primarily* something taking place BETWEEN people. It is something which people are participating together IN. Fellowship is *not merely* sharing with one another. Fellowship is **sharing or participating together in something which we have in common**. And that "something" which people are participating together in is **the life of the Holy Spirit**.

⁴¹ *Word Studies: Philippians*, p.57

⁴² *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

⁴³ I agree with the distinction made between "praying in the Spirit" and "praying with the spirit" by Arthur Wallace in his book, *"Pray in the Spirit"*. "In the Spirit": Ephesians 6:18; Jude 1:20. "With the spirit": 1 Corinthians 14:14-15.

The Holy Spirit is the only One who gives the life of Christ which sustains His Body.⁴⁴ Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would “take of what is Mine and declare it to you”.⁴⁵ So, “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” is people **participating in what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing** – *He shares with us the life of Christ, and we share the life of Christ with one another.*

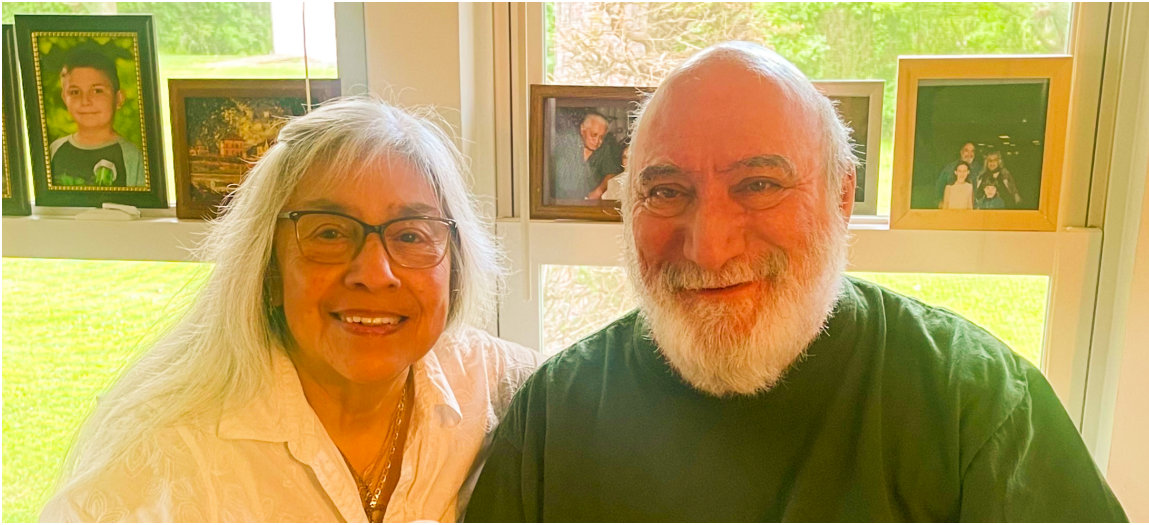
“**The fellowship of the Spirit**” has to do with our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit and our personal devotional life, consisting of the various spiritual disciplines, which John Wesley referred to as “holy habits”. But “the fellowship of the Spirit” also has *a collective dimension*, in which the members of the Body partake of the life of the Spirit, partner in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, receive life from the Head and share it with one another.

I’ll close with the reminder that “vertical” fellowship, that is fellowship with the Holy Spirit, is pre-requisite for “horizontal” fellowship, that is, fellowship with one another. “Horizontal” fellowship is an outflow of “vertical” fellowship. In “the fellowship of the Spirit”, God speaks to us both privately and publically, both individually and collectively.

⁴⁴ John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6

⁴⁵ John 16:13-15

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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