



FROM THE PASTOR

by Bro. Mark Sikes

Relationship, Fellowship or Both? (Part 1)

IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM, AND WALK IN DARKNESS, WE LIE, AND DO NOT THE TRUTH:" (1 JOHN 1:6).

Do we have a relationship with God, fellowship with God, or both? The Bible is clear that we can have both – but only if we meet God's requirements, first.

1. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. Unsaved people have no relationship with God; they are in fact, the enemies of God (Romans 8:7). Therefore, the only people who have a legitimate relationship with God are those who have been saved by grace and born into His family. This means we can't work for it, earn it, buy it, or join it. Fellowship with God can only be received as a gift of God's grace (Romans 4: 4, 5).

Likewise, if there is nothing we can do to earn our relationship with God, then there is nothing we can do to keep our relationship with God, either. We are saved by grace, and we are kept by grace. Let's think about that for a moment.

If my relationship with God is entirely by grace, then I don't have to DO anything to maintain that relationship. Hmmm. That means I don't have to come back to church on Sunday night or Wednesday night anymore. I don't even have to come on Sunday morning if I don't want to. In fact, I don't have to put a dime in the offering plate, study my Bible, pray, or witness to the lost either.

2. OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. Being in fellowship with God is very different from having a relationship with God. As we have seen, our relationship cannot ever be broken – but our fellowship with God can be broken. Contrary to popular belief, having a relationship with God does not guarantee fellowship with God.

There are three requirements that must be met to enjoy sweet fellowship with God: Salvation, Scriptural baptism, and Identification with a New Testament church. † Salvation is required because no one can have fellowship with God until they have fellowship to God. † Scriptural baptism is required because baptism is the first act of obedience for a new believer. + Identification with a New Testament church is required because the church is God's chosen way for His people to perform acceptable service in this present age.

Simply put, if a person is not saved, that person cannot be in fellowship with God. And if a person hasn't followed the Lord in Scriptural baptism, that person is out of fellowship with God. And if a person is not actively involved in the work God is doing in and through His church, that person is out of fellowship with God as well.