

The Doctrine of Fellowship: Introduction

Doctrine Matters

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Bible Text: Genesis 3:8-11; Hebrews 10:10-25
Preached on: Wednesday, March 6, 2019

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The following is a presentation of Grace Covenant Baptist Church, West Monroe, Louisiana.

Koinonia, the Greek word in the New Testament is translated "fellowship" most of the time but it is translated as "contribution" in some places where Paul goes and he takes up a collection, a contribution for the saints in Jerusalem. Well, when he talks about, when he's making reference to the contribution and taking up a contribution, he uses the Greek word "koinonia," and it kind of speaks to what koinonia or the biblical version of fellowship really is.

You see, fellowship is not a spiritual gift. Fellowship is not something that you can do if you want to or don't do if you don't want to, or some people are really good about fellowship and so, you know, they're there all the time, some people not so much. Fellowship is actually a doctrine. Fellowship is a doctrine of the church and we know that doctrine are those things that God has given to us, has revealed to us through his Scripture, that his view of things is not optional. His commandments, his teaching when we talk about doctrine, those are not optional. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your might." That's doctrine, right? We don't get the latitude of saying, well, I love Jesus today and tomorrow I wake up in a bad mood and I don't love Jesus so much and so I don't love Jesus and that's okay. Right? We don't get that option, right? Or repentance of our sin, that's a doctrine, the doctrine of salvation, and so God has revealed what salvation is and we are to embrace and accept and live in light of the salvation teaching that God's given us. So when I say fellowship is a doctrine, as we'll see here in a little bit, these are God's commands. This is what God is teaching us. This is what God expects of us in the church.

Now you'll notice I've given y'all a rather lengthy outline. Don't worry, we're only going to cover the first page. The back page where it's got all of the other things on it, that's for your reference. That'll let you know where we're going over these weeks together. We're going to hit, I'll just mention this, we're going to hit on about three or four areas in the doctrine of fellowship. We're going to hit on fellowship being our responsibility to challenge each other to holiness. We're going to talk about fellowship, the doctrine of

fellowship is our responsibility to grow in the grace of Christ. That fellowship is our responsibility to actively be an encouragement to others, and by the way, to receive encouragement when they give it to us. And then the fourth area is that fellowship is our responsibility to proclaim the Gospel in very real ways.

Now you'll notice in each one of these four subcategories that I've given to you, that I've said fellowship is a responsibility. The doctrine of fellowship lays out for us and we'll see this as we go through these texts, I didn't just pick them out of the air, I actually went through them, read them, thought about them, and every time I read one of those texts that you see listed there, it talks about responsibility. It is our responsibility to do this. It is our responsibility to respond this way. It is our responsibility to build up the brothers. It is our responsibility to live godly lives. So, you know, fellowship which is basically defined as spending time with each other in kind of modern translations, stems from our spending time or abiding with God and the fruit of our abiding with God is demonstrated in these responsibilities that the doctrine of fellowship lays out before us, okay?

We're going to talk more about those and so as we go along, we're not going to get all this done in one night, I promise you. We're probably going to be in this, I would guess based on the outline I've given you, 12 or 13 weeks at least. We're going to take a pretty comprehensive look at fellowship, okay? So if you miss one, don't worry. We'll get it all on SermonAudio and you can pick it up and come back again when you're able, but I think this is a doctrine that is important for the church because the doctrine of fellowship and people undertaking the responsibility to encourage and to be an encouragement, to receive encouragement, the responsibility to challenge each other in holiness, the responsibility to confront error, you don't hear that too much in church life today, do you? As a matter of fact, a lot of church life today is, "Come on over to our place and listen to our music and get energized. Come on over to our place and listen to our pastor because he is doing a lot of good work." We don't hear a lot about our personal responsibilities to uphold, uplift, to build up the body of Christ, to be an encouragement.

So I hope tonight as we pilot this series on the doctrine of fellowship and then as we go through this study on fellowship, that the Spirit of Christ would speak to all of us and in those areas in our lives, each of us where we're falling short, that we would repent of that failing and seek God's grace to not only restore us back into a proper fellowship with God in that area of our life but to restore us back to a proper fellowship with our brothers and sisters and really begin to undertake the responsibility that God has set before us. Make sense? Yeah? Okay.

[unintelligible question] No, other side. Yes, we are going to start tonight in Genesis.

The basis for this whole series is before we get to the Genesis account, the basis for this whole series is a set of verses that everybody is very familiar with, Hebrews 10. We actually covered these this past Lord's Day. Hebrews 10:24-25 that says,

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,
25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but

encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Everything that we're going to talk about in this doctrine of fellowship is based upon at least in some way or fashion, thoughts and truths in those two verses. Now we're going to go to a lot of other verses as we go along, but that's where it begins.

So as I was kind of thinking about our time today and thinking about, okay, how would I introduce this, how would I pilot, if you will, this series, I was just, I did a search and I was doing some research and I was kind of reading through some things and the Baker, let's see, it's the Baker Bible, it's some...anyhow, it's a Bible dictionary that gives some pretty expanded definitions, made the mention that in the history of mankind, that we were created in God's image, right? "In the image of God made he male and female," right? And because we're made in God's image, we were made for fellowship, and the Baker work that I was reading was making the point that throughout the Scriptures, all throughout the Scriptures you see God fellowshiping with his people, fellowshiping with Adam and Eve, fellowshiping with Abraham, fellowshiping with Moses, the fellowship that was broken by the sin of Israel, God sent the prophets to try to bring Israel back into proper fellowship, and then ultimately through Jesus Christ we're all restored into a proper fellowship, right, you notice we keep using this word again and again and again, through Jesus Christ, but where things went wrong is at the beginning, right? In Genesis of all places, which it was amazing to me, I wasn't looking for it because we're kind of on this, you know, creation account origins idea this year, I didn't go to this text and go, "Oh, yeah, we can weave this in and we can make it work." No, no, no, I was looking for something completely different and this is where the Lord took us, to Genesis 3, and I believe there are five principles related to the doctrine of fellowship that we can draw out of Genesis 3:8-11.

Now the verses that we're going to read tonight and talk about are kind of in the middle of a bigger story, alright? God had created Adam and Eve. They existed in perfect fellowship with God. Adam named the animals and everything was good. God told them, "Go enjoy everything but the only thing you can't do is eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because in the day you eat of it, you will surely die," right? And we know that Eve was tempted by the serpent and she took of the fruit and she ate it and she gave it to her husband and he ate of it too. Okay? And so they broke God's command, they broke his law by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and where we pick it up in verse 8 is right after they have eaten of the fruit, forbidden fruit, their eyes have been opened, they realize that they're naked, and we're going to pick it up in their very first interaction with God after they had disobeyed his command, taken on their own autonomy in that they were going to start making their own decisions and we see that fellowship is broken.

Now I want to highlight something else to you, this text that we're going to look at, 8 to 11, is immediately preceding the curses where God curses the serpent, he curses Eve, and he curses Adam, alright? And it is immediately before God gives us the greatest picture of restoration, the greatest picture of restoration and salvation in all of the Scriptures.

Now it's not the greatest expression because Jesus Christ is the greatest expression but the greatest picture of salvation is when God killed the animal, the animals to clothe Adam and Eve. That's later on down here in chapter 3. We're not going to cover that so we're at the episode that immediately follows them disobeying and the fellowship is broken, immediately preceding the curse, and then the promise of salvation.

Genesis 3, starting at verse 8, reading down to verse 11.

8 And they [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And [the man] said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." 11 [And God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

The first thing I want us to see here related to the doctrine of fellowship is that we're all made by God for genuine fellowship. Now I'm on the five point outline that's on the front part of your, not the expanded outline but just the five simple points. That's where I am. Genesis 3:8-11. We're all made by God for genuine fellowship. The text that we're looking at tonight said, "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," and they ran away because they had never heard that before and it terrified them because God was so big and it was boom, boom, boom, boom, walking through the garden. No. No. Now they hid themselves, that's true, but they hid themselves not because God walking in the garden was an anomaly that they had never experienced before, they hid themselves because there had been a breach of fellowship.

You see, God, if you just consider God in the Triune Godhead, God exists in community and God exists in fellowship with himself: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God created man that we might commune and fellowship with him and we, as people created in the image of God, are created for fellowship. God said, "It is not good that man should be alone so I will make a helpmate for him," and so he caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and he took a rib from Adam's side and he closed up the place where he had opened it, and from the rib he fashioned woman, and he brought the woman to Adam and Adam called her Eve because she was the mother of all the living. You see, we see immediately in the opening verses, opening chapters of the Bible, that Adam was created to be in fellowship with God but God knew that he needed fellowship with somebody else and so he created Eve. It wasn't that God was insufficient or couldn't make it all the way, it's just that God realized that Adam had a material need and that was a helpmate so he created Eve, and prior to the fall, Adam and Eve got along great, right? There was no bickering. There was no fussing. There was no fighting. There was no, "Well, you always do that and I've asked you a thousand times not to do that." And, "No, you've never asked me to do that." "You're supposed to know. You're my husband. You're supposed to know." "No, I'm not a mind-reader." There wasn't any of that jazz, right?

Right? Hello? Woo-hoo? Okay? Yeah, our single person in the room says, "Right." Our married people are going, "I don't want to look at him because then he'll know that we've had that conversation." Now our single person is terrified about getting married. Marriage is great. I'd do it in a heartbeat. Just make sure you marry the right person. That's right.

We were created for fellowship. Now as a Christian, this idea of created for fellowship extends beyond our intimate relationships to our relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ, other Christians. As a Christian, as a believer, I have been created by God for fellowship with other brothers and sisters.

We were talking Sunday about long distance satellite worship and I don't know to what degree I ruffled feathers or not, I may not have, but I don't believe you can worship long distance. Worship, when you worship God it requires personal presence and so this idea of worshiping via listening to music on the radio or worshiping by watching a podcast of your favorite pastor or worshiping by, you know, watching a video or a satellite, you know, service, when you're not there, that's not worship. Worship requires that you be personally present because you were made for fellowship and when a Christian, when a believer worships God, they are worshiping in the presence of God. A believer does not send God a telegram and say, "O God, you are so great! You are worthy to be praised!" No, a believer, a Christian, when they express those sentiments towards God, you are holy, you are righteous, you know, we just sang, I just read in our Psalm this evening that we would sing a new song, that you deserve glory and praise for your righteousness and your equity and your holiness, as you are expressing those truths to God in praise and worship, it is necessary that you do that personally; that you are in God's presence when you say those things and you are fellowshiping with him when you're saying those things.

Now look, here's a distinction just to tag onto what we said Sunday morning: can you praise God individually? Yes, absolutely you can and I think we do, but you can't worship God individually because worship requires fellowship, fellowship of you with God and fellowship of you with other brothers and sisters, other believers, who are currently worshiping God also. Worship is a corporate affair, it's not an individual affair. Praise can be individual, worship is corporate, and you have to be personally present to do it. Why? Because you were created for fellowship. Just like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit exist in fellowship, Paul says that the church is the bride of Christ, that he is her husband, he is her head, and that we submit to him and that the body, the church is a body made up of different members but one head. Those are all terms of fellowship.

Adam and Eve heard the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they knew exactly who that was, they knew exactly what was about to happen, and that is that they were going to be in the presence of God fellowshiping with him, and the problem was that this time something had gone wrong. Well, what went wrong?

Yes, yes, question. [unintelligible] It may be worshipful, you might use worship as an adjective but really what you're doing is praise. [unintelligible] You can praise God individually. You can sing to God and praise him individually. You can pray. You can

study. You can meditate. You can, I mean, there's all kinds of things that I think that you can do to praise him individually but because worship is a show-up personally kind of deal, I mean, you're ascribing worth to God basically in worship, that's a corporate affair. The church worships. And I didn't check this and I probably ought to, a research committee somewhere will, I do not believe that, at least I can't recall currently on the top of my head, anywhere in the Scriptures where an individual is said to be worshipping. Now John says, "I was in the Spirit of the Lord on the Lord's Day." Okay, it doesn't say he was worshipping. But look at all the places where you see worship of God going on, think about Revelation, all of the saints at the throne worshipping; the angels in Isaiah 6 and in Revelation calling back and forth to God in a worship. Worship is always corporate.

I think, and the reason why I'm kind of making hay on this issue is because that is a huge misunderstanding among Christians in our world today. I can stay at home, I can watch a worship service via Facebook or podcast or I can go back to my favorite sermon that I've listened to a thousand times but it really speaks to me, and I can do that by myself, in my home, and I can call it worship and I can feel good about fulfilling the Lord's Day in that I have, you know, honored it and kept it holy, and part of that is worshipping God. But you see, the reality is that if I stay by myself and stay out of fellowship, then I'm not really worshipping, I'm just praising, and we're to praise God 24/7, we're to worship God one day in seven because as you see....

Hang on, I've got questions stacked up. I can tell this is off to a great start. Worship is what God's people do. Praise is what God's people individually may do but worship is what God's people collectively, corporately do. So, I don't know if I answered that question or not.

Yes? [unintelligible question] Yup. Yup. Yup. Well, I would ask this question: how is it not praise?

[unintelligible] Yeah, yeah, but why?

[unintelligible] But why? Why? And here's why I'm making the distinction and maybe this will answer your question: if we don't stipulate the why, okay, I got it that listening to the radio, just driving around town running errands, picking up dry cleaning, going to Home Depot, but I'm listening to Hill or the Cross and I've got praise and worship songs going on and they're saying, "Welcome to our Sunday morning worship," and I'm at worship but I'm doing my errands, why is that not worship?

[unintelligible] Okay. Alright.

[unintelligible] Yeah, there's no connection.

[unintelligible] Yeah. Yeah.

[unintelligible] No, you are, you are, you are in...hold on.

[unintelligible] Okay, that just means.... Let me peel the layer back of the onion, okay? I would disagree, I would make a distinction that though you are in personally, individually in communion with Christ in that moment as you're praying, as you've got the praise and worship music going on at the house or whatever, that the doctrine of fellowship doesn't stop at your communion with Christ, the doctrine of fellowship expands to your communion with other believers as well so that fellowship has a corporate component to it, okay? The expression of that corporate component is best seen biblically on the Lord's Day when God's people are called together for what purpose? To worship. To worship. We were called together to worship.

So what I would say is to answer your question, when I'm communing with God individually although it may look very similar to what happens in a corporate service, I mean, I may sing songs, I may pray, I may have Bible reading, I may preach to myself, I may listen to somebody preach or whatever, as long as it's me communing with God, then that's praise, when it's me communing with God in the presence with the fellowship of other brothers and sisters who are doing the same thing, that's worship. So the distinction between praise and worship is praise is more individual, worship is more corporate. I think answering it that way answered your other question maybe.

[unintelligible] Okay. I never thought that way before. It happens a lot, doesn't it?

So, now look, you're sick, you can't get out or there's extenuating circumstances or whatever and you can't make it to the church on the Lord's Day, okay, that happens. That happens. I mean, that even happens to the pastor sometimes so I'm not saying that if you're at home and you can't get out, then you're sinning by not being among God's people. I am saying, however, that if that's your major mode of activity and you want to be by yourself and you don't want to be around other Christians and for the most part you are just listening to podcasts or satellite something or other, or the Hill or the Cross, then yes, I would argue, I would submit, I think and I'm trying really hard, I would think there's a certain phrase that I've used forever that Nancy has told me forever don't use that phrase. I'm trying, okay? I would think based on what we see in the doctrine of fellowship that if your major way of doing things is to forsake the assembling of the saints which is the habit of some, that you are engaged in a sinful behavior. It's sin. It's sin to not fellowship with the church, okay?

[unintelligible] Yeah, if you're able. Now if you're not able, then there's some other things that can be done to help you be a little more able so just don't say, "Well, I can't drive, you know, when it's raining or when it's sunny. I can't drive when it's warm. I can't drive when it's cold." Yeah, I've heard those.

[unintelligible] Yeah, you can find all kinds of stuff to disable you. Okay, so don't drive. We'll come pick you up. As a matter of fact, I'll pick you up at your house when I pull into the parking lot because the person who told me that lived on the edge of the parking lot literally. I don't drive at night. You're, literally you can hit the rock, hit the church with a rock from your house. I will pick you up literally. Literally. This is not hyperbole,

this is not pastoral exaggeration, this is somebody living literally on the edge of the parking lot and could hit the church with a rock from their front door and they didn't drive at night. They didn't have to drive even if they lived 10 miles away, we'd of gone and got them.

So anyhow. That's the distinction between praise and the distinction between worship. Now, yes?

[unintelligible] Okay. Reading song lyrics on the screen, okay. Alright. [unintelligible] Well, that can be an expanded conversation which I would love to continue that with you and we've talked about some of it but let me just give you a principle that will help guide our thinking in terms of what is appropriate in worship and what is not. It's called the regulative principle and you've heard me talk about the regulative principle before, right? Okay, probably because I talk about it a lot, the regulative principle of worship. Now we're going a little off-track but I'm willing to do it.

The regulative principle of worship says this: unless God has said, "This is how I want to be worshiped," we don't do it, okay? Unless God has specifically said in the Bible, "I want to be worshiped this way," we don't do it. So worship the Lord with tambourines, with cymbals, stringed instruments, the harp, the lyre, worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, worship together as a corporate body come together on the Lord's Day. You know, those are just some examples of the ways God has said, "I want to be worshiped this way," which stands in contrast to how most of the evangelical life worships today. They worship under what's called the normative principle. Normative principle. The normative principle says unless God has said, "Don't do it," it's okay. So God didn't say we couldn't use a smoke machine. God didn't say that the pastor couldn't come up out of the floor in a Maserati. God didn't say that we couldn't use....

[unintelligible] Oh, that's a whole another one. Him and his wife stayed on the roof for 30 days. They moved the bed up there. Never mind.

[unintelligible] That, yeah, that's V-neck t-shirts and skinny jeans, okay? We're not going there.

So you can see there are a lot of things that just say, "Well, God didn't say that we couldn't do it, so it must be alright." So it's kind of like, "Well, you know, mom and dad didn't say that I couldn't have 30 people over for a party while they were gone. They didn't say that so it must be okay," when you know good and well your mom and dad don't want 30 people in their house for a party while they're gone, right? So that's the normative principle.

So, again, it's a conversation that I'd love to have and we can talk about it as we go along. You know, I would say just in general, the restrictions are what is reverent, what is God-honoring, what is edifying. Edifying, okay? I'll let you look up the word "edifying," okay? That's homework for this week, look up the word "edifying," and you'll find that it's different than encouraged, encouragement, okay? Edify. Be careful with those.

So all of this is that we're, the problem is that we're created for fellowship but I was fixing to talk about point 2, that our disobedience has driven us away from God. The problem with fellowship even in its modern expressions, even when we see you have conversations like and I just can't believe that this was actually said, "We'll help you dis-fellowship from the church where you are." Wow. That a pastor would even say that is frightening to me, "If you're having trouble leaving your church, we'll help you dis-fellowship from your current church to come to our church." Those kinds of things, people who just, you know, don't ever attend, you know, they've got this and they've got that and they took care of this and this came up and they weren't expecting it, and by the time they got done with all of that, they were tired or they were overwhelmed. Of course you're tired and overwhelmed because you're letting all kinds of stuff get in the way of your fellowship.

It's disobedience. It's disobedience. Disobedience has driven us away from God. In this Genesis 3 passage, it says, "and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." They hid themselves. They ran away. Now it's kind of funny because God created them and created the garden, created everything and they're trying to hide from him? But do you see what disobedience does?

I was driving home this afternoon and I saw a sign, a business, there's a business here in town that has these kind of sayings on their sign, they're kind of encouragement type sayings, and their saying that they have on their sign right now is, "Fear is trusting in the wrong thing." Fear is trusting in the wrong thing, and I'm thinking to myself, well, we've been talking about that. We've been talking about Sunday, this past Sunday, not having confidence because we've put our trust in the wrong thing and if you don't have confidence, then what comes is fear, and that's what Adam and Eve did. Their trust was no longer in God to tell them what was right, what was wrong, what was good, what was bad, what was evil, what was good. As long as they were trusting God to make sure that they were where they needed to be, they had no fear of him, right? But in the moment they took the reins and disobeyed and decided, "We're gonna start making decisions for ourselves," they at that point started trusting in the wrong thing and when God showed up, fear ensued and they ran away.

You know, I think there's a lot of people in evangelical life today who have disassociated themselves from a church because of fear. They're afraid. They're afraid maybe they've been gone so long, they're afraid somebody's going to criticize them for being gone so long. I don't know. Maybe they're afraid that the sin that they've been involved in is going to be so evident to everybody around them that they're going to be called out or they're going to be outed, maybe not called out but everybody's going to know and, "There's something wrong." Right? Or maybe they're just afraid that if you fellowship too much people will get to know you and maybe they're a little uncomfortable with people getting to know them.

[unintelligible] Yeah, in a lot of ways. I think people kind of want to keep folks at arm's distance. You know, they want to let them in whenever they want something or need

something from them but then when that's done, they just kind of want to keep them at bay.

[unintelligible] Sure, but I would also say, you know, to that statement, we're not sure what people are going to do with what they learn about you when they develop these intimate relationships. Can't we trust the grace of God within his church to make sure that that doesn't go where it shouldn't go?

[unintelligible] Sure where you fellowship. [unintelligible] Yeah. Well, where you pick to go and where God sends you to go, many times they're two different things. Yeah, sure it does because whenever the church, and that's why we're going through the doctrine of fellowship, whenever the church is viewing fellowship and secondarily as we've seen tonight, worship versus praise, when the church is functioning biblically in a God-honoring way related to the doctrine of fellowship, then we begin to understand that those things that we know about others are for our own encouragement not so that we can get one-up on them, right? And there's plenty of, I mean, plenty of texts in the New Testament that kind of talks about divisions and backbiting and stirring up the pot and, you know, Jude talks a lot about those that are coming in just to kind of get into the church for their own benefit and so there's ways to deal with those kinds of issues secondarily but, I mean, why can we not trust the grace of God, that if we are functioning in true fellowship, if we've embraced the doctrine of fellowship, understanding the disobedience drives us away from the presence of God and disobedience drives us away from the presence of other brothers and sisters, that if we repent of that and turn back to this transparency that's appropriate, right? I mean, you have to be careful with transparency. We don't just, we're not transparent on everything, right? Yes, we have boundaries. The Bible teaches boundaries, things that are right and proper and good, things that are for edifying, not for tearing down, but for edifying, for building up, the giving of grace in the moment of need, right? Those are boundaries. If we are functioning as God has commanded us to, if we're functioning more like Adam and Eve were functioning prior to the fall, then what are we afraid of?

Of course, somebody's going to say, "When you get people in the church that aren't functioning like they ought to," well, how about we guard the front door and make sure that people like that don't necessarily make it in, and you have to be discerning too, right? Because we live in a world where wolves show up in sheep's clothing, right? So we don't just automatically trust that the person that we're talking to within the walls of the church are where they need to be with, you know, certain information, right? But the point is that we can't even get there if we're willing to remain in disobedience. We can't even get there if we're willing to remain in disobedience because disobedience drives us away from the presence of God.

So as we go through our study in the doctrine of fellowship in those areas where the Holy Spirit goes, "Hello? Are you listening?" And we choose, "What does he know? He doesn't know everything. He doesn't know where I came from. He doesn't know. I've been hurt. I've been abused by the church before. I mean, years ago. And I'm just not going to listen." If we're going to be like that...am I stepping on toes? I'm sorry. If we're

going to be like that, we're never going to get to where we're talking about with trusting God's grace in the giving of information to edify one another. We're not going to get there because even if it's one issue, we're still Adam and Eve, "I know better than God and my disobedience drives me away from the presence of God," we're going to be hiding from the presence of the Lord God among the trees in the garden, as if that's really going to help. Does that make sense?

But, you know, we're not the first. Listen to this, Jonah 1:3, "But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish," you see three times in one verse the writer of Jonah says Tarshish, "away from the presence of the LORD." Jonah was afraid of what God wanted him to do. Jonah was not willing to trust in the grace that God had promised to give to him to do what he told him to go do, so Jonah was being disobedient. In his disobedience did he stay at home and pretend like nothing had ever happened? No, he went down to Joppa, got on a boat and headed to Tarshish. He is running away from God. By the way, a little side note here, and this is what is even so interesting for me about Jonah: he believed if he got to Tarshish that God couldn't get to him. What? God did get to him, sent a big old fish, didn't he? And do you remember what Jonah told the sailors? I mean, "I worship the God of the land and the sea." Well, why are you running to Tarshish? Because his disobedience had driven him away from the presence of God.

Number 3: God is seeking to restore the fellowship that has been broken by our disobedience. Let me say that again and make it personal. God is seeking to restore the fellowship that has been broken by your disobedience. "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Adam, Adam, where are you?'" You know, this is not the James Earl Jones version or the Charlton Heston version, "Adam, Adam, where art thou?" This is one of those instances when you wake up and something or somebody who's familiar is not there and you start going, "Where are you? Are you okay? What's going on?" Now look, we know that God in his sovereign knowledge knew what had happened so it's not a matter he didn't know, but do you see the intimacy, the intimate character of God that is seeking to restore fellowship? Fellowship.

Now we know the story didn't happen this way because it's written for us right here in Genesis what actually happened, but just for a second, what would have happened if God said, "Adam, where are you?" Adam would have stepped out from behind that tree, "I messed up. I did the thing you told me not to do." Would there have been consequences? Absolutely because God said, "In the day you eat of the tree, you're going to die." But would it have gone down differently? Yeah, I think it would have. It may have meant that the animals still died. It may have probably meant that the animals would still die and that God would clothe them with the animals, but there would be a, the breach of fellowship would be restored instantaneously through confession of the disobedience and repentance of the disobedience and seeking the restoration that God was offering because God is seeking to restore the fellowship that has been broken by disobedience.

In John 3 speaking of the Lord Jesus starting at verse 19 it says, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." We'll stop there for just a second. People love the darkness rather than the light because their works were disobedient. We break fellowship when we're being disobedient in this area of the doctrine of fellowship. We tend to hide.

Now I'm going to say this: our church is not perfect. I don't know that anybody in our church ever claimed that our church was perfect but I don't think and I do not believe that anybody in our church certainly within the last five years, has ever been condemned or looked down upon by the members of our church for something that they've done. There are things that happen around here all the time that, you know, we have to confess and we have to repent, we have to be restored, we have to work through some stuff. I mean, I think I've been sideways with everybody in this room at least once. I'm the pastor, it happens, right? But haven't we restored that fellowship? So what I'm saying is for people who have disassociated themselves with our church over the years, it isn't because our church is an angry, belligerent, hateful church. I do believe that our church is a gracious and kind and forgiving church and so the issue is not the fear of what other people are going to say, ultimately the issue is the fear of what God is going to say related to the fact that they had disassociated themselves with the fellowship because, remember, disobedience drives us from the presence of God, alright, but God is seeking to restore that fellowship that's been broken.

So John goes on to say, "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." Related to the doctrine of fellowship, when we have one of those Adam moments, instead of going through what we're going to see here in just a minute where he starts saying, excusing and rationale and, "It's not my fault," we really just need to step up, take ownership, take responsibility for the wrong thing that we've done, confess it and say, "I've done this. Please forgive me." Again, it may not remove the consequences of that sin but it certainly will restore the fellowship and if God is one by nature seeking to restore people, then why can't we be people with the Spirit of God living in us, why can't we be people by nature who are seeking to restore fellowship also? Shouldn't we be people who are seeking to restore fellowship? Okay? And that doesn't always mean giving in to what that person wants, "Oh, you're so right. I'm so sorry. It was all our fault. We had no idea that was the problem but we'll take ownership of it. We're so sorry. Please come back." No. No. No, no, no, no, if we're wrong, we're wrong and we'll admit we're wrong but if you're wrong, you need to take responsibility and admit you're wrong too, and we can all confess and repent before the Lord and restore fellowship and it'd be that much sweeter, right? We need to be seeking restoration.

Number 4: this breach of fellowship results in fear, instability and vulnerability. Adam said, when God said, "Adam, where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." I'm ashamed. I'm

ashamed of myself. I'm naked. You see, I notice three things and there may be more but these are the three things that I noticed here in this text. 1. Fear. He was afraid because the text says it, right? "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid." That's a present, it's an imperfect active indicative. It's the Old Testament but it's an imperfect. It just didn't mean he had a fleeting startle, it means he was afraid. He knew that something bad was fixing to happen but what Adam missed or what it seems like Adam missed, he took God at his word. It seems that Adam is taking God at his word. God said, "In the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die." So Adam, I suppose, figured God was fixing to come settle accounts. Nah, nah, nah, nah. Nah, nah, nah, nah. Hey, hey, goodbye, right?

[unintelligible] As long as we're doing it together corporately.

Adam missed the grace of God in the moment but God didn't zap him with a lightning bolt, God was seeking to restore the fellowship but the disobedience had driven Adam away from the presence of God because of fear and when we allow disobedience in our own lives to drive us away from the fellowship of God's church, the presence of God and the presence of other brothers and sisters, then a lot of times we're doing that for fear. We're afraid. But the thing that we may not necessarily catch is the instability.

He says, "because I was naked, and I hid myself." I realized that right now I'm in a spot that I wasn't in before and I don't know what to do. My source of stability is gone. My source of constancy is gone. I no longer, Adam was no longer fellowshiping with God in the way he had before. They're on different terms and Adam didn't know what to do. You see, he had gotten what Satan said he would get, "In the day that you eat of the fruit, God knows that you'll get the knowledge of good and evil and you'll be like him, you'll be able to tell the difference between good and evil," and all of a sudden Adam found himself in that spot where he could tell the difference between good and evil and he didn't know what to do with it. He couldn't handle it.

So his stability that was granted to him in that perfect fellowship with God where God handled all that stuff and Adam just had to do what God told him to do, the stability that he had when he was obeying God was gone and sadly I see that with a lot of folks who break fellowship with God's people for whatever reason, is the stability is one of the first things that goes out the window. Stability in the circumstance at hand, stability in how they handle problems that crop up, you know, in the future and come at them. You know, there's just no stability because the church for the believer, the church is one of the greatest storehouses of stability because the church is where God resides with his people. God no longer resides in the Holy of Holies over a golden altar in a place that only the high priest can go into once a year after he's taken a sacrifice for his own sins, God resides within the fellowship of his people. Amen. If you're saved by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we just saw that in Romans 9 or 8, 8 not too long ago, if the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead has indwelt your mortal bodies, then you belong to Christ, that you're saved, we talked about that with regeneration, if the Spirit of Christ has indwelt you, then what happens when all of God's people when they collect up together? God is there. Isn't that great?

So when God's people are gathered together in fellowship, there is a stability that just this world, nothing in this world can provide and so with fear, you're driven from the presence of God, when you're driven from the presence of God, there is an instability because you just don't know how to handle what you're experiencing and because you don't know how to handle, that instability is there, obviously there's a vulnerability. You're easy pickings. You're not within the protective fellowship of God.

Now don't take that too far. As we see God with Adam and Eve, God provides a way to restore the fellowship back with Adam and Eve although he removed them from the garden, and I would argue in him removing them from the garden, they never again in this earthly frame walked with God, okay? Verse 8, "they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," and they were afraid because they had disobeyed. God drives them from the garden of Eden at the end of this account never to walk with them again in this mortal frame. Now, who knows what happened when Adam and Eve died and they did, they ultimately died, but they never walked with God again in this mortal frame.

[unintelligible] Yeah. What's the difference in those two things? [unintelligible] Okay, so you're taking walking with God as being spiritual? Okay. No, I'm just saying they never physically walked, they were never physically in his presence again while they were still living this mortal life, a physical thing, because that's what's happening here in the garden. I believe when they, it says, "heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden," that they walked around physically with him in the garden. And again, they never enjoyed that again.

Oh man, can you just imagine how depressing that is to have walked with God, fellowshiped, talked with him. "God, why did you make the duckbill platypus look like you did?" "Well, you know, let me tell you." You know? And then that's gone. Gone. You want to talk about a bad break-up, woo, that's a bad one. That's bad. Depressing to spend the rest of your life not that God's distant and God's not there, I think that they continued to speak to God but not in the way they had spoken to him before.

[unintelligible] Not with that presence, yeah.

[unintelligible] Yes, absolutely. [unintelligible] Yes. Yes. Yeah, the question is the garden of Eden prior to the fall with Adam and Eve walking with God in the garden in the cool of the day, talking with him, fellowshiping with him, I mean, face-to-face, I mean, God's right there, they're talking to him, okay, it's a picture of the restored relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ in heaven in the consummation of the ages. Yes, that's where we're going.

[unintelligible] Yup, bingo. That the closest physical representation that we have to actually walking in the garden in the cool of the day with the Lord God in a physical sense is when God's people gather together, worship primarily but whenever God's people are gathered together in the fellowship of the church. Yup.

[unintelligible] Well, as you're singing, as you're praying, as you're edifying one another, encouraging one another, this whole doctrine of fellowship, that's, you might say that's the tangible benefit, one of the tangible benefits of subscribing to the doctrine of fellowship is that there's that physical presence, not the same thing as Adam and Eve had prior to the fall but the closest that we can get in this earthly frame prior to our glorification at the consummation of the ages.

So in a sense, it is practicing to get ready for that so that you'll be able to recognize what that is. You can think about it that way, I guess, but if you don't have that, if you have been driven out by fear, you've got instability and vulnerability because you're out there on your own.

Why is it and y'all know this, you've heard, I've said it, you've heard other pastors say it, that it is so easy when a believer begins to cut themselves out away from the church, that they're easy pickings spiritually and you are. As a matter of fact, that's one of the spiritual battles that Christians fight is that Satan gets in there, begins to create division with that believer and his church, and they start, you know, Satan starts whispering all those ugly things about other people and, "That's just so hypocritical. I can't believe they ever said that. You know, that preacher, he's preaching at you." And then that way it cuts you out away from your support network because in the body of Christ, perfect love casts out all fear, 1 John says, right? And if perfect love has cast out all fear, then the stability that we have in that is that we're like the man who built his house not on the sand but on the rock and the winds came and the rains came and the winds blew and the house did not fall because it was founded upon the rock, and if we've got no fear followed by stability, there is no vulnerability. Neither life nor death nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God. If God is for us, who can be against us? Do you see the strength and the protection that is found whenever we give ourselves obediently to the doctrine of fellowship?

Ma'am? [unintelligible] Okay.

Romans 2, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." What Paul is saying here is the Gentiles who are not part of the church, they don't know anything about God understand the basic core principle that when you are not fellowshiping, that fear and instability ensue.

Now look, there's a whole lot more in that and I don't want to be guilty of eisegesis of that text because Paul is making the point that, you know, Gentiles have a conscience that regulate their earthly behavior but that conscience doesn't do them any good in their judgment before God. They're still guilty before God even though their conscience has, you know, been telling them, "Don't do that. Don't do that." They may have morality,

they don't have righteousness but if you think about that the extension of that, even the lost person knows you don't abandon your support network. The most die-hard Nascar fan realizes the very thing that Lightning McQueen didn't realize, and that is you need your pit crew, that's all the people that help you change the gas and tires. You can't be a one-man show. You abandon that and you aren't going to make it long.

Number 5, and this is what launches us into the weeks to come related to the doctrine of fellowship: God confronts this breach, the breach of fellowship, with his truth. God said, "Adam, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" In this moment when God is seeking to restore fellowship, Adam and Eve have disobeyed him, they've done what he said don't do, he's going, there's going to be a curse, the formal pronouncement, this is, we were talking about contracts earlier at the end of last week, here is the classic what's called a suzerain vassal contract or covenant. Suzerain is king. Vassal is servant. God is King. Adam and Eve are servants. God said, "You do this, this is what's going to happen." Well, he's fixing to tell them what's going to happen. He curses the serpent. He curses the woman. And he curses the man.