***Fellowship and Baptism***

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***Introduction:*** “Why can’t everyone just get along?”

 A. Why can’t all who call themselves Christians simply come together and believe
 and practice the same thing? **(1 Cor 1:10)**

**1 Corinthians 1:10**  10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

 1. At first glance it seems very simple and possible.

 2. The prayer of Jesus makes these questions very important. **(Jn 17:20-21)**

**John 17:20-21**  20 " I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

 3. What is the church of Christ? When we commit ourselves to Jesus as our one

 Lord and enter into his one body through the one baptism we are then guided

 by the one faith! **(Eph 4:4-6)**

**Ephesians 4:4-6**  4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

 4. Churches of Christ exist because they follow Jesus as Lord! Should we lower

 the standard? Is this church a “church of Christ?”

 B. Why can’t we just announce everyone’s events and swap pulpits with any church?

1. We are seeing “non-traditional” house churches forming in several communities
 that are reaching out to and participating in opening their “circle of fellowship.”

 2. Could that which is called “traditionalism” actually have a Biblical basis?

***I. Where do you draw your circle?***

 A. It is God’s place to draw circles and not men. **(1 John 1:1-3)**

**1 John 1:1-3**  That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life -- 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us -- 3 that which we have seen and he

 1. The apostles did not determine the “circle” – it was delivered to them.

 2. We should simply give the conditional promises of God to all men without any
 change whatsoever.

 3. These promises and their foundation are called the gospel.

 4. There are truths to be believed and promises that are to be obeyed.
 **(Rom 10:16; 2 Thess 1:8)**

**Romans 10:16**  16 But they have not all **obeyed** the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

**2 Thessalonians 1:8**  8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

 B. What if men drew a different circle? **(Acts 15:1)**

**Acts 15:1**  And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

 1. A different circle represents a different gospel. **(Gal 1:6-9)**

**Galatians 1:6-9**  6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

 2. Both are not equal. Only one must be accepted. What if it’s the wrong one?

 3. It is not a matter of popularity or of how original and trendy the writer, it is a
 matter of what has been delivered! **(Gal 1:10-11)**

**Galatians 1:10-11**  10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. 11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

 C. Do churches today have different “circles?”

 1. There are huge differences on almost every aspect of how one is saved.

 2. The most trendy writers who have influenced brethren are confessed Calvinist!
 Is one saved without any conditions? Their beliefs are disguised.

 3. What if we extended fellowship to those who believe we are saved at the point
 of faith without confession or baptism?

***II. Fellowship and Water Baptism***

 A. Why has differences on the subject of water baptism historically demanded a
 separation of fellowship?

1. Jesus placed baptism as a foundational doctrine for all Christians. **(Eph 4:4-6)**

**Ephesians 4:4-6**  4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

2. Paul indicated that all Christians were brought into fellowship with Christ and
 His blood at the point of baptism. **(Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:26-27)**

**Romans 6:3-4**  3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

**Galatians 3:26-27**  26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

 B. In the reformation movement the Anabaptist were severely persecuted for their
 *correct belief* that only believers should be baptized and that baptism was a burial.

1. Should only believers should be baptized? **(Mk 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-38)**

**Mark 16:15-16**  15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

**Acts 8:36-38**  36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

 2. The Bible teaches that baptism is an immersion. **(Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12)**

**Romans 6:3-4**  3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

**Colossians 2:12**  12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

 3. This created tremendous political and social upheaval. Many lost their lives in
 proclaiming this truth. Modern day Baptist churches come from this stand.

 4. Consider the confusion and future compromise if this was made an opinion and
 both “truths” could be equally taught and believed. What would have happened?

5. Compromise on truth leads to convenience becoming the determining factor.
 Men will ask: “Was is the easiest doctrine to practice?” **(1 Kgs 12:28)**

**1 Kings 12:28**  28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

 C. Great controversy exists over the purpose of Baptism.

 1. Baptism is the final step to find forgiveness of sins. **(Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16)**

**Acts 2:38**  38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 22:16**  16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

 2. A failure to understand the purpose of Baptism can result in men being
 sincerely immersed in water but never having received the baptism Christ
 instructed. *Into what were you baptized*? **(Acts 19:1-5)**

**Acts 19:1-5**  And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard *this,* they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

 3. This truth is why those churches of Christ had to separate from the various
 denominations and stand with other Christians upon this truth.

 D. The certainty of assimilation.

 1. What will happen if you joined a local denomination and held to the gospel?

 2. You *may be* tolerated if *only* give financial support to those who differ with
 you, if you allow all who want to receive Christ be taught *contrary to what you
 say you believe,* and that *only* preachers and literature that teaches contrary to
 what you say you believe be used. Also you are forbidden to “cause division”
 by pushing (teaching) what you believe *with anyone*.

 3. Could you accept those conditions and be taken seriously by anyone that you
 believe what you say you believe? A separation of fellowship is demanded!

 4. Consider the danger of assimilation. After the civil war nearly 10,000 from the
 south moved to Brazil.

 5. The *Confederados* also have an annual festival, called the *Festa Confederada*...
 The festival is marked by Confederate flags, Confederate uniforms….

 6. The modern house church movement is a half-way house to denominationalism.

***III. The fruits of a compromised fellowship***

1. The most common cause of a compromised fellowship is pride. **(1 Cor 5:1-2, 6)**

**1 Corinthians 5:1-2**  It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

**1 Corinthians 5:6**  6 Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1. Again men will judge by their own sense of relationships and “freedom.”

2. This intellectual superiority brings compromise! **(2 Cor 11:3-4, 19-21)**

**2 Corinthians 11:3-4**  3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted -- you may well put up with it!

**2 Corinthians 11:19-21**  19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise! 20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you,* if one takes *from you,* if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To *our* shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold -- I speak foolishly -- I am bold also.

 B. A compromised fellowship is a sure path to unbelief.

 1. Do you realize how few churches believe in the inspiration of the Bible today?

“Tolerance and ecumenism are like father and son. The grandfather is a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. The existence of ecumenism demands tolerance. The movement the ecumenical unity has involved the discounting of more and more that might be important enough to differ over.” – Bob Waldron, “The Jewel of Consistency

 2. Do you realize how many churches are accepting homosexuality?

***Conclusion:*** Where would my children be today if I had not taken such a stand?

 A. Should I have left the denominationalism?

 B. The reason I left is because the freedom I found in Christ. **(Rom 6:17-18, 20-22)**

**Romans 6:17-18**  17 But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

**Romans 6:20-22**  20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.