

Fellowship Today and Tomorrow

'A first-grader went on her first day to a newly integrated school at the height of the segregation storm. An anxious mother met at the door to inquire, "How did everything go, Honey?" "Oh, Mother! You know what? A little black girl sat next to me!" In fear and trepidation, the mother expected trauma, but tried to ask calmly: "And what happened?" "We were both so scared that we held hands all day".'

And, I can add, in so doing, they had fellowship with each other all day long, and presumably long into their futures. If there is anything that is characteristic of the Gospel and of the faith called Christian, it's love. Or at least it's supposed to be, and, as time marches on ever closer to the Lord Jesus' return, it will become more and more evident that true Christians will love each other. And when people love each other, does it not follow that they fellowship with each other? They spend time with each other. This is not only a good thing, obviously, but it's also a very necessary thing. For when we fellowship together, gathering together to spend time together, especially in the worship and praise of our Lord and Savior, then, as He promised, He is always with us in a particular and special way. And all this togetherness results in an often unrecognized vital result: strength. It was not

for no reason that Hebrews 10:25, read just moments ago, explicitly states: “This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning”.

Consider here the Letter to the Hebrews itself. Unlike the other letters of the New Testament, Hebrews does not mention its author. While many scholars, including Perry Stone, are fairly certain that Hebrews was authored by the Apostle Paul, the fact that it does not mention him at all, in contrast to all his other letters, I think it’s far more likely that Apollos from Alexandria is the author. Martin Luther thought so, as do a number of other scholars. Recall that in the Church of Corinth, there were schisms, divisions in the church, because one group there said it faithfully followed Paul, while another group said it followed Apollos, still another said it followed Peter, and a fourth group said it followed Christ Jesus! What a mess! The devil’s fingerprints are all over this. Sowing discord and disunity among the believers is one of his favorite tools of his dastardly trade. Recall, too, how Paul reprimanded them for their childish faith. He told them in I Corinthians 3:4-9: “For when you divide yourselves up in groups—a “Paul group” and an “Apollos group”—you’re acting like people without the Spirit’s influence. Who is Apollos, really? Or who is Paul? Aren’t we both just servants through whom you believed our message? Aren’t each of us doing the ministry the Lord has

assigned to us? I planted the church, and Apollos came and cared for it, but it was God Who caused it to grow. This means the one who plants is not anybody special, nor the one who waters, for God is the One Who brings the supernatural growth. Now, the one who plants and the one who waters are equally important and on the same team, but each will be rewarded for his own work. We are coworkers with God and you are God's cultivated garden, the house He is building".

With that history in mind, does it not make even more sense that Apollos was led by Holy Spirit to write Hebrews, and this particular verse? Believers, don't let trivialities stop you from fellowshiping with each other. This must not be. And especially so since the end of the End Times is drawing closer and closer and it will become increasingly difficult and perilous to stay faithful to Christ Jesus. As times get harder and harder, we'll need each other more and more. Not less! For it's when we're together, get together and live our faith lives with each other, that we strengthen and encourage each other to not only hold fast to the faith but increase it and become even bolder and mightier in God's ways.

Fellowship in many churches, especially bigger ones, is all too often shallow at best. People, though all bought and paid for by Christ's shed blood on the cross and indwelt by the One and Only Holy Spirit, treat each other often as mere acquaintances when, at root, they are and should manifest the fact that they are closer to each other than their earthly families. For they're mem-

bers of the family of God. And that family is what will eventually, as the Lord's Army, overturn and defeat once and for all time the devil's counterfeit, fake kingdom on earth. Even now, he's desperately trying to establish a one-world government to set up his end time rule over all the earth, and eliminate every last trace of the Holy Bible, us Holy People and the Chosen People of God.

We've been hearing much in recent months of the seemingly inexplicable massive increase in antisemitism, seemingly because it's claimed to be in response to Israel's so-called war crimes! In case you were wondering, there are no intentional war crimes. No genocide in Gaza. On the contrary, Israel is destroying terrorists, and thereby liberating the Gazans and Lebanese. But as tragic as this antisemitism, and the unbelievable pogroms in Amsterdam and other places are, Christians are suffering even more. But do we hear anything about it? The Biden administration not only doesn't care, but actually wants to be rid of us. Remember we're "garbage". What else explains the fact that high officials in the Federal Emergency Management Agency ordered relief workers to skip homes in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas that displayed Trump banners? But far worse are the massacres of Christians occurring in other places of the world, particularly Nigeria. As of November 14th, last Thursday, for 2024, in Nigeria, 4,879 brothers and sisters in Christ have been killed for the sole reason they're Christians. And in that country, over 5 million believers are in refugee camps where they have fled for their

lives. And yet, the Biden regime has refused to designate what's happening there as genocide, or even crimes against humanity! We pray this will change under the incoming administration.

We must be continually thankful to God that Washington, D.C.'s administration is about to change. It's truly a massive act of God's mercy that He's allowed us yet more time to repent, turn from our wicked ways, and back to Him. And it's during this window of mercy that we must be more visible in our acts of blameless faithfulness, fearing not ever any possible backlash from those around us severely infected with woke mind virus and Trump derangement syndrome. It's not about Trump, or Christians, or even Jews. All of it is a rebellion against God, organized by the devil, and he's been working on it for a very long time.

But what does it mean for us to serve God, to live our lives in faithfulness? What do our lives actually mean? What does it mean to be alive? What is our purpose? Well, those deep questions aren't going to be fully answered in one, or many, short sermons. But at one level, the answers are quite simple. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says: "the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever". While we can't precisely define what that means in every situation and circumstance to glorify God, on the other hand, I'm sure we all have some idea. And particularly know things we do that do not glorify God. In that sense, it's not hard to know our purpose on the earth. It should be obvious, as believers, as followers of Christ Jesus, that our lives are

not defined by what we want and desire. We find something we like and so we want more and more of it. We're titillated by some experience or some entertainment. We like the feeling, or the emotional high, of some drug or alcoholic drink. Or any number of other things. But all of those worldly things are but distractions. Sure, there's nothing wrong in enjoying the wholesome "diversions" that God has provided for our pleasure, but I think you know what I mean by the seemingly inexhaustible smorgasbord of shiny, glitzy, lovely, baubles of distractions everywhere we look. Love here. Pleasure there. Until even the people around us become just objects to entertain, amuse and gratify us. This is the very opposite of loving God and loving others as ourselves.

But herein lies another feint. We can love our spouses, our families, so dearly, and fool ourselves into thinking we're loving God and others as ourselves. Praise and thank God for the families He's given us. But they and we ourselves are each individual and special creations of God. And He loves each of us so dearly that we can't even imagine it. We each will always feel the grief when a loved one suffers, and eventually passes from this earth. Though suffering may seem pointless, even cruel, we don't know everything God does. But we do know that everything He does is just and fair and perfect. And He is absolutely trustworthy and good. In all things. All the time. And so we hold fast to Him as we maintain our fellowship with each other. As if our lives depended on it. Because they do.

