

Outline of Topics:

The Believer and Fellowship with Christ

The Believer can only survive if fellowship with Christ is known. We often live under a shadow of doubt or of uncertainty. Does God really desire to have fellowship with ME? I am such a failure! I have so little to offer? My mind wanders so terribly when I try to read and pray? We will see that John 13 offers helpful insights and answers into some of these and other questions.

The Believer and Fellowship with Others

We were also wired to enjoy relationships with each other. Fellowship among believers is one of life's greatest blessings. Yet so often it is not enjoyed or even disrupted as a result of minor differences. What is the basis for that fellowship? We will look at 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 and notice how our fellowship is defined and determined. We will learn the implications of gathering together on Lord's Day to express our fellowship in the Breaking of Bread.

The Believer and Food

"You are what you eat" has been the rallying cry of those who stress vitamins and healthy eating habits. While its truth may be debated in the natural sphere, it is a maxim in the spiritual realm. Why should you read? How should you read? What are the results of reading? These and other issues will be looked at from 1 Peter.

The Believer and Faith

Faith is constantly under attack. The media, educational institutions, our society - all consistently bombard the believer with messages and innuendos all intended to undermine faith and to ridicule it. Spiritual things have been marginalized in our society and relegated to a crutch which the weak-minded require. How are we to handle all the new discoveries and new pronouncements which fill the media, each claiming to have disproved the reliability of Scripture, the existence of God, the reality of Christ, etc? Loyalty to God will be the theme of this meeting.

The Believer and Failure

Few believers escape the pain of failure. There are a rare few among us who move with daily mountain top experiences, but most of us know the valleys all too frequently. How are we to deal with failures? Is failure final with God? Can God use a person who has failed "big time" in his life? Lessons from the life of Jacob will put into focus the potential for failure along with the spheres of failure and the road to recovery. The life of Jacob teaches that failure is not final with God!

The Believer and Fruitfulness

Was the Christian life meant to be one frustration after another? When you examine yourself and see so little fruit and so much failure, it is discouraging. In every generation, believers have had the truth of John 15 to encourage and instruct them concerning this vital subject. Some of the truths of the chapter may well be familiar to all, but there may as well be fresh truth that will be liberating and helpful to others.

The Believer and Foes

Spiritual warfare will encounter spiritual enemies. We have been taught, since the first days of our Christian life, that we encounter three foes: the world, the flesh, and the devil. How do they attack? Which is the most difficult with which to deal? Has the Word of God equipped me to fight these foes? James writes about these foes, and in a real life scenario shows by the experience of believers to whom he wrote, how deadly and sinister the attacks can be.

The Believer and Freedom

Christ has made us free! But what does that mean? And what about the oft-quoted Scripture, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty?" And what about Paul's "All things are lawful" statement? What exactly is Christian liberty. What about the abuse of liberty? We will examine these and other Scriptures touching on the issue of freedom.

The Believer and Fears

Anxiety: when is it right and when is it wrong? How do I control my needless fears? Is there a difference between being careless and being carefree? In Philippians 4, Paul writes of the "garrisoned mind" which is kept in a state of peace by God. Yet Paul himself felt daily the "care of all the churches." How can we live above the emotional angst which seems to mark our society?

The Believer and Fellowship with Christ:

Read: John 13

1. What aspects of the timing and circumstances heighten the sense of how valuable the Lord views communion with Him to be?
2. Compare and contrast John 13 and John 15, noting that both chapters deal with cleansing; yet each is different and distinct.
3. Are we at any disadvantage to the disciples who actually walked with the Lord Jesus when it comes to knowing and enjoying Him?
4. What are some of the consequences of fellowship with Christ?
5. What differentiated John who leaned on His breast, from the other disciples?

Intensity of His Desire

- Look at the Circumstance
- Look at His Conduct
- Look at Communion
- Look at the Circle - open to every believer

Imperative Demanded

- Cleansing
- Consecration

Intimacy Delighted in

- Contrast
- John could lean on that breast and then “fall” on His breast.
- Place was open to all but only one of the 12 enjoyed it

Intelligence Derived

- High priest had on his breast the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim. It was where Israel went to discern the mind of God
- John was the one who was asked to learn the secret. He was on His breast.
- In fellowship with Him we learn His mind. So many issues are crystal clear. But for others, the better we know Him, the better we know what would bring pleasure to Him.
- John found Rest, Refuge, and Revelation on the breast of Christ

Importance for Daily Living

- Dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty in a dark night

The Believer and Fellowship with Others:

Relationships with Believers in the Assembly, Unbelievers, and Believers not in assembly fellowship

Read Eph 3:8-13; 4:20-33; Gal 6:10; Col 1:27-29; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 John 3:16-18; 4:12

1. What is fellowship?
 2. What determines how far I can go in my relationship with the unsaved?
 3. What limits if any should I place on a relationship with a believer who is walking disorderly? Not in assembly fellowship?
 4. What implications does the Breaking of Bread have on my treatment of others?
 5. Is there a difference between fellowship with an individual believer and with an organization?
- A. The Breaking of Bread and its Implications - 1 Cor 10; 11**
- 1 Cor 11 the significance of the supper and my fellowship with believers
 - 1 Cor 10 regulates my behavior and relationships when not at the Breaking of Bread
- B. The Bond and its Obligations**
- The Link we Share - Eph 4:20-33:
 - The Love we Show
 - The Light we Shed - Eph 3:8-13; Col 1:27-29; 1 Thess 5:15; Gal 6:10
- C. Boundaries and Obedience**
- Limitations which Test Us - Loyalty to the Truth - 1 Cor 1:9; 10:14-22; 2 Cor 6:14-18
 - Nature of Fellowship
 - Narrowness to Avoid
 - Individual believers
 - Other denominations
 - Avoid being judgmental
 - Necessity for Care
 - Individuals
 - Groups
 - Non Believers and The World
 - My Character:
 - Light - To REVEAL Positive to shine out; testimony, truth
 - Salt - To RESTRAIN - Negative. It is mostly character in view as seen in the first part of Matt 5.
 - My Concerns:
 - My Conduct: 2 Cor 6

The Believer and Their Food:

Read 1 Peter 1:22-2:5

Reality check:

- How many have read the Word of God each day this week?
- How many have spent time praying, not merely saying prayers?
- How many have appreciated something fresh from the Scriptures this week?

1. Word of God is Truth
 - “ye obeyed the Word of Truth;” It is AUTHORITATIVE
2. Word of God is Transcendent
 - It lives and abides forever
 - The grass is the routine of life
 - The flower of the grass
 - The Word of the Lord endures forever.
 - The Word of God is APPROPRIATE
3. Word of God is Transforming
 - Brought life out of death
 - Brings holiness out of defilement
 - Brings light to darkness;
 - Word of God is ADEQUATE
4. Word of God is Trustworthy
 - Able to depend on it for your salvation
 - Able to depend on it for your spiritual life
 - Able to depend on it for all of life
 - It is ACCURATE
5. Word of God must be Tasted
 - Making time for the Word of God
 - Marring your appetite - vs 1
 - Memory that stimulates appetite - vs 3

The Danger of Neglect - Heb 5:11-14

- Loss of Light - the writer not able to unfold to them the truths that Spirit would have desired to unfold. The cause was they had become dull (sluggish, lazy) of hearing;
- Lack of Growth - instead of being able to ingest and digest meat, they were still babes and needed milk, to be spoon fed.
- Limitation in Usefulness - they should have been teachers but were instead still in Kindergarten class.

The Dependence Necessary - 1 Cor 2:12-16

- A God Who desires to Communicate - vs 10.
- An Indwelling Spirit Who is Competent
- An Inspired Word which is Available
- A Dependent Attitude
- Obedience which is critical - Psalm 25;

The Believer and Faith:

Loyalty to the Lord

Read Mark 12:28-31

Questions:

1. What does it mean to love God with all our minds?
2. What challenges to this total loyalty to God do you encounter?
3. How do you answer the “unanswerable” questions of life which men raise to question the righteousness and or the reality of God?
4. What are the implications of loving God and loyalty to God with all our strength?
5. What does all this have to do with “faith?”

A. His Design

- Love with ALL means no room for rivals or rebellion
- Love with ALL our minds, hearts, soul, strength, means nothing compartmentalized

B. What He Deserves

1. Intellectual Loyalty - all the mind
 - Challenges
 - Confidence in Character of God
2. Emotional Loyalty - all the soul
 - Realities of Life
 - Refuge
3. Heart Loyalty - all the heart
 - Rival Suitors
 - Riches of Grace seen in the chapter to recall us
4. Physical Loyalty - all thy strength
 - Mentality we face - it is mine
 - Motivation around us
 - Measure of Loyalty

C. How they were Deficient

1. Their minds - vs 18-27
2. Their bodies - vs 1-12
3. Their hearts - vs 38-39 and possibly 13-17

D. The Display in a Widow

1. She gave her strength
2. She showed intellectual loyalty
3. She showed emotional loyalty
4. She showed heart loyalty.

The Believer and Failure:

Failure is not Final

Read Gen 33:17-20; 34:1, 2, 5, 7, 13, 25-31; 35:1-7, 9, 10

Questions:

1. In what spheres did Jacob fail?
2. In what spheres did Jacob see recovery and “success?”
3. How did God treat Jacob's failure?
4. What were Jacob's steps to recovery?
5. Look at how Jacob finishes his days. Is there anything significant about his final days in light of his early days? What encouragement does that hold for each of us?

1. The Scope of His Failure

- In His Personal Pathway
- In His Public Testimony
- In His Parenting - 35:1-4

2. The Steps to Recovery

- Breaking in of the Voice of God
- Bowing in obedience to the Word of God
- Bearing responsibility

3. The Sovereignty of a Faithful God

- The Constraining Hand of God
- The Changeless Heart of God
- The Causeless Grace of God

4. The Strength of His Finish

- Jacob finishes his life in a blaze of glory. At least four great marks at the end of his days:
 - Gen 47:31 Communed in Worship
 - Gen 48:5 Claimed a Generation for God
 - Gen 47:10; 48:20-29 Conferred Blessing upon Others
 - Gen 49:24 Confessed God as His God

The Believer and Fruitfulness:

Read John 15:1-10

Fruit-bearers - Fellowship of Life

Friends - Fellowship of His Heart

Fellow Witnesses - Fellowship of His Sufferings

Questions:

1. Why is Christ the vine?
2. What is the fruit this chapter talks about?
3. The Lord Jesus said that whatever we asked for we would receive (v 7). How would you explain this to someone who mocks the idea of prayer?
4. At what age do we stop bearing fruit?

FRUITFUL OR FRUSTRATED

1. Description - Picture of the Vine
 - I am the true, genuine, real vine.
 - Why this picture?
 - Why a Vine?
2. Designation - Persons
 - Father
 - Christ - the Vine
 - Believers - the branches
3. Definition - Produce
 - What is the fruit of this chapter?
4. Distinctiveness - Peculiar Nature - of the Fruit
 - It is not charm or charisma.
5. Development - Process by which Fruit develops
 - Activity of the Husbandman -
 - Abundance of the Vine - Life in all its fullness dwells in the vine
 - Abiding of the saints - what does it mean to abide?
 - Asking of the Father
6. Delight - Pleasure
 - Fruits brings the father...
 - In the pathway of obedience we discover ...

The Believer and Their Foes:

Read James 4:1-17

1. Which of the three foes do you think is the most difficult to cope with?
2. In what way does Satan, who can only be in one place at one time, continuously bombard us and tempt us?
3. What is “the world?”
4. How do you think things became so bad in James 4 that they were “killing” one another and acting like “friends of the world?”

The Incurability of our Flesh vv 1-2

- The problem
- The progression
- The passions
- The problem emphasized

The Intensity of the Conflict v 2

- War - all out campaign
- Fightings - individual battles; even if you win a battle, the war continues
- Ye kill - in what sense?
- Ye ask amiss
- Testimony of an Unfruitful Life - cf: 1:18
- Thirst of an Unsatisfied Life - frustration of a self centered life
- Tragedy of an Unfulfilled Life - Loss of every purpose for which I was saved

The Influence of the World vv 3, 4 (*look at worldliness in the remainder of the chapter*)

- When he is dealing with the flesh, why does he bring in the world here?
- Notice the critical, self-righteous spirit of the world which is seen in vv 11-13
- Notice the independence which marks the man of vv 13-16
- Notice the sin of omission in v 17

The Infidelity with the World v 4 (*How does this verse link with the foregoing? How does he move from the internecine battle in the assembly to “loving the world?” Is the thought that in their behavior, they were acting by the world's standards and conforming to its behavior. As such they were becoming friends of the world, applauded by it for their attitude.*)

- God's View of worldliness
- God's Valuation on their Behavior - Enmity with God
- God's Verdict

The Interplay of all three foes vv 1, 2, 4, 7

- The devil has created a society, a world which appeals to our flesh, caters to our flesh, inflames our flesh, provokes our flesh
- He has set in motion forces in our world which control our thinking
- He was a murderer from the beginning (1 John 3);
- Media

The Intervention of Divine persons vv 5-6

- Spirit's Groaning
- God's giving grace
- God's nearness v 8
- Lordship claims v 15

The Individual Responsibility - vv 7-10

- Submit yourselves
- Draw nigh to God
- Purify your hearts
- Your laughter turned into mourning;
- Resist the devil
- Cleanse your hands
- Be afflicted and mourn and weep;
- Humble yourselves in the sight of God

The Believer and Freedom:

Read Gen 2:8-17; Rom 6:18-20; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:29; 2 Cor 3:19; Gal 2:4; 4:26, 31; 5:1, 13

1. What is freedom or liberty?
2. What does it mean “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3:19)?
3. What controls my liberty?
4. What does God intend me to do with my freedom?
5. Did Paul think that anything was allowed if it meant seeing people saved, according to 1 Corinthians 9:19-23?

A. Concept of Freedom

- Liberty is ...
- Liberty controlled by
- Liberty is always a Test

B. Control of Freedom

- Paul's handling of liberty/freedom in 1 Cor 7-9

C. Context of each mention of Freedom

- Rom 6 - Master, Monarch and Freedom
- 1 Cor 8
- 2 Cor 3:19
- Galatians 5

D. Consequences of Freedom

- Holiness
- Fruitfulness
- Love
- Light

E. Confusion over Freedom

- License
- Legality
- Deal with 1 Cor 9:19-23 - Paul relinquishing rights, not assuming liberties

F. The Crisis of your Freedom

- Mark 10:52
- You have been set free from sin and slavery; you have a choice to make with your life.

The Believer and Fear:

Read Matthew 6; Phil 4;

Questions:

1. Anxiety: when is it right and when is it wrong?
2. How do I control my needless fears?
3. Is there a difference between being careless and being carefree?

The Garrisoned Mind - Phil 4:4-9

A. Focus for our minds

- Responsibility recognized
- Reality of the possibility
- Repetition to Stress

B. Freedom for our minds

- Freedom from anxiety
- Freedom from assumptions
- Freedom from Asserting our rights

C. Filter for our minds

- Content: *show how failure to dwell on these things creates tremendous anxiety. For example, the worrier due to "what if.." " the person who always sees the worst possible case scenario is not training their mind on what is true. The person who is angry because of what they feel they are missing; As for the rest - whatsoever things are ...*
- Control - think on these things - imperative;

D. Fortification of our Minds

- Guarantee - the peace of God shall
- Garrison - cf. the Roman garrison and pax Romana

E. Fruitfulness of a Mind at Peace

- Discipline of mind linked with discipleship
- Importance of obedience. The anxiety of living in two worlds: spiritual and natural.