

mp3/49/HEBREWS 10 v 19 to 25.MP3

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[0 : 0 0] Let's bow briefly before God. Father God, we thank you for the Word of God. We thank you for the privilege of Christian worship, being able to meet with your saints at the mercy seat.

And as we gather here this evening, our desire would be to hear from heaven. Lord, we have your Word. Your Spirit has been given to us, but we grieve him and quench him.

And so we plead with you, O Lord, to renew in us tonight that power and the presence of the third person of the Trinity, which makes the Word of God to be a living Word, vital and life-changing.

Give us grace. If there are any without Christ, Lord, show them what they're missing and draw them to yourself. And for those of us who profess to be your own, O Lord, give us grace and wisdom to live for your glory day by day in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to address the subject of biblical fellowship tonight, and I'm going to hang it very loosely on Hebrews 10, 19 to 25. It's more a topical sermon than a biblical exposition.

[1 : 1 9] I've been searching this week for a picture. Internet's a fabulous place. It's amazing what you can look for. I have in my mind a memory from my early Christian days of a picture that hung on a number of people's walls in their houses. And on that picture, there were three sailing ships.

One was called worship. The second was called discipleship. And each sail had different texts on it. Maybe you've seen one, or maybe you even know where to get one, and you can guide me afterwards.

But the third one is my subject tonight, fellowship. It seems that a ship is a good analogy of what it means to be a Christian and to live in God's world, in God's presence, and with God's people. A ship is on a journey somewhere, normally, and all the different individuals on that ship are about their own private business, their individual business, but they're all going in the same direction.

And yet, at the same time, they are integrated in a way which is quite unique, aren't they? They sink or swim together, if I can stretch the analogy just a wee bit further. I think we need at times to come back and think about what this fellowship looks like. We take it for granted. It's a word we use regularly. So what I'm going to try and do in the next half hour or so is to draw to your attention something of what the New Testament teaches on fellowship. I want to consider the meaning of the word to begin with, fellowship. I want to then look at the basis of our fellowship together, and then lastly, to consider what it means to enjoy that fellowship. Fellowship, what does it mean?

I'm sure you might even have used that word today. I'm one of these kind of people, when I want to understand a word, I'm off to my dictionary. I have an old copy of Chambers' Dictionary, if you know the book, and it's well worn. I always need to find out what a word means to see if I can get my head around what I should understand from it, and to have fellowship is to have communion and share in something which people hold in common. The world around us understands this very principle and expresses and uses the word fellowship. It's not just Christians that use the word fellowship.

[3 : 49] Wherever you get a people together with a common interest, they're quite often called a fellowship, and just to demonstrate that, I looked up a few. There's the fellowship of the royal society.

Very learned people, and I don't think I'd be part of that grand group. There's the medical research fellowship, and if you're not in that lofty group either, you're probably familiar with Tolkien's book, The Fellowship of the Ring. So it's a word the unbelieving world uses to describe a group of people who have a common interest, and they have an interaction based upon that interest. From the very beginning of Christianity, the concept of fellowship has been at the center of all that Christianity actually meant.

Christianity is a fellowship. It's not a club. A club is somewhere you can come and take benefits from and go and decide here, there, and whenever whether you're part of it. A fellowship is somewhere that you live and work for mutual help and mutual understanding. The New Testament emphasizes this because it keeps on calling us brothers and sisters, not just members. We are indeed a fellowship. Listen to one or two verses from the New Testament.

Acts chapter 2 verse 42 is where it comes up very early in the New Testament scriptures. After they've been converted by the Spirit under Peter's preaching, it says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. I've heard many sermons on that little verse with the four sort of pillars of Christian life.

They devoted themselves. It was not a laissez-faire, careless type of relationship. It was a deep, committed relationship together. They had the truth. They had met God in Christ, and now they understood themselves to be children of God. When Paul writes to the Philippians chapter 2 in verse 1, he says, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, and here's the statement, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.

[6 : 32] Here we're instructed that that fellowship is something which is created by the Holy Spirit. He's the author of eternal life in our souls. He's the one who's brought us out of sin and into Christ. He's the one who's given us a new heart, and he's the one who's come to dwell in us.

Paul tells us twice in the New Testament that we are to remember we are the temples of the Holy Spirit. He's present. He's dwelling in us. 1 John chapter 1 and verse 7, But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have faith.