

The Fellowship of Faith

James 5:13-20

Introduction

Summary of the “Works of Faith” series, what we’ve learned so far:

- Faith alone saves; faith is never alone.
- Faith produces the fruit of righteousness (good works) in Christians, which point others to Christ.
- When God puts the bit of grace into our mouth to gain control of our tongue, we can speak the words of faith, pointing others to Christ.
- When we draw near to God, He gives us the grace, love, and mercy to humbly live a life of faith before Him that points others to Christ.

What we will learn today:

- Through confession and prayer, God works reconciliation in us, molding us into the fellowship of faith, which points others to Christ.

What Is a Fellowship?

Webster defines a fellowship as “a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim.” We see an excellent illustration of this in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Ring*. The first book is *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which introduces us to this group that Gandalf the Grey has put together and leads to take the Ring of Power to Mount Doom in Mordor to destroy it. This group is very interracial. It consists of 4 Hobbits, 2 Humans, 1 Elf, 1 Dwarf, and a Wizard. Like the church, they don’t always see eye to eye, they get on each other’s nerves, and even fight. But they realize that they must get past their differences and work together to complete their task.

Christian Fellowship Is in Christ

Gandalf called and assembled these characters for this quest. What makes us a fellowship? Christ is the One who has called us before the foundation of the world. He bought us with His blood and unites us by His Holy Spirit. We are not members of this church by our own doing. This says quite a bit about church membership. I’ve had some people ask me, “Why should I join the church?” We are Christians because Christ has called us. When He called us to be His, He called us to be members of His body. How can we love the Head but not want to associate with the other members of the body? Therefore, we should take our church membership seriously. United in Christ, we are united to one another.

United in Worship

We receive this union when we gather around the Word and Sacrament. Christ draws us into Himself when we hear the Word and partake of His body and blood. One of the many names for the Sacrament of the Altar is Communion. “Communion” means “with one.” It is about unity, and our unity with Christ is expressed in our unity with one another. This is one of the reasons for close Communion.

When we gather at the rail, we are saying, “We are of one heart, one faith, and one mind in Jesus Christ.” If that’s not the case, we are lying as we receive the body and blood of Christ our Savior.

Christian Fellowship is About One Another

Since we are united in Christ, it’s natural that the essence of this fellowship is that we live for each other. The early church expressed this by selling all they had and pooling all their resources for one another and for ministry to the community. While I am not advocating for that type of communal lifestyle in this culture, we are commanded by Christ to love one another as He has loved us. When He said this, He had just washed His disciples’ feet, taking on the role of a servant. But His love went even farther than that. Hours later, He died for us.

Unity of Heart

This unity of heart is not about outward blessings. It comes when we fulfill what James says in verse 16 of our text today: *Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* By confessing our sins to one another, causes for strife are taken away. By praying for one another, we receive wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. God heals us, reconciles us, and strengthens our unity.

Christian Fellowship Points Others to Christ

And of course, the upshot of all this is, as Jesus said, others will know that we are His disciples. This unity of Christian fellowship is attractive. People aren’t used to this kind of relationship. What’s more, this fellowship is a work of faith, which points others to Jesus Christ.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
