

## Who Are My Brothers and Sisters?

*“Both He (Jesus) who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” Hebrews 2:11*

The desire to belong to a family is a deep need in every person. When we are born again of the Spirit, this desire and expectation is intensified now that we belong to the family of God. Unfortunately, for many sincere Christians, their yearning to have fellowship with a loving and godly church family will not be met, and some will even have their hopes completely devastated. Why does this happen? It will help if we understand what the Bible says about Christian fellowship. The apostle John said, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ... God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3, 5-7).” John goes on to say, “No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has seen Him or knows Him... by this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God (1 John 3:6, 10).”

Some Christians think that you can have spiritual fellowship with any person who is saved and has God’s Spirit in them. But this is only true *if* that person is practicing righteousness that is based on faith. If that person is practicing unrepentant sin, then they are walking in darkness and rebellion to God’s Spirit, and it not possible to have spiritual fellowship with them (1 Corinthians 5:11). The Bible is clear that we can only have spiritual fellowship with other Christians who practice righteousness and do not practice sin. Of course, none of us can expect to find a perfect church, but we should expect to belong to an authentic church that is growing in the grace and truth of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Since only those Christians who practice righteousness are genuine believers with whom we can experience true spiritual fellowship, we must ask ourselves, “How can we practice righteousness so that we can have fellowship with God and with His people who also practice righteousness?” Once again, the Bible is clear: you can only practice righteousness *if* you have been freed from sin’s power (Romans 6:18). And how can you be freed from sin’s power? The Bible says you were freed from sin’s power when you died to sin (Romans 6:7). But when did you die to sin? The Bible says you died to sin when you were born again and your sinful nature was destroyed and removed from you (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11.) Therefore, if you believe and act on this Biblical truth, you can practice the righteousness that is based on faith (Philippians 3:9). Consequently, the only way you can practice true righteousness is to believe and act on the Biblical truth that God removed your sinful nature when you were saved in order to free you from the power of sin. Just as there is only one door to enter into salvation, there is only one door to walk in righteousness: believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. There is no other way to practice righteousness that is based on faith. Anyone who tries to practice righteousness by any other way is unbelieving and disobedient to the Word of God. Instead of submitting themselves to God’s righteousness, they are practicing a false righteousness and a counterfeit Christianity. They may outwardly appear righteous to men, but they are lawless and full of hypocrisy on the inside. They have a different faith (really a false faith), a different gospel, a different spirit, and a different Jesus. Is it any wonder that when true Christians try to fellowship with these unbelieving “Christians,” they are attacked by Satan? Of such, the Bible warns: “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness or what fellowship can light have with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with the devil? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).”

This is why true Christians will encounter rejection, hostility and persecution if they try to fellowship with false Christians who do not practice true righteousness based on faith in the cross of Christ.

Jesus said that in the Day of Judgment there would be many people who claim to be Christians and say that Jesus is their Lord, but God will not allow them into His family because they do not practice Biblical righteousness that is based on faith (Matthew 7:21-23). The Bible says that in these last days many people will practice an outward form of Christianity, but their lives will deny the power of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. The Bible warns us to not to have any fellowship with such people (2 Timothy 3:5). When a church is filled with these false Christians, it is false church. It does not matter whether you belong to a house church or a mega church, if it is filled with false Christians, get out! Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8).” This would indicate, that when Jesus returns, there will be very few Christians who are practicing God’s righteousness based on faith in the truth of the cross of Christ.

In closing, who are My brothers and sisters? Jesus said, “Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister (Matthew 12:48).” Although God has called many to salvation, it is only those few who do the will of God and practice true righteousness based on faith who will be chosen worthy to belong to His heavenly family (Matthew 22:14). In these last days, it is far better to go outside the camp of counterfeit Christianity and suffer reproach with Christ than to belong to a false church and try to have fellowship with false Christians (Hebrews 13:5). And if our heart’s desire for fellowship with the family of God is not met until the age to come, we can be more than content today with our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

*“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we would be called children of God! And that is who we are!” 1 John 3:1*

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