

## THE CALL INTO FELLOWSHIP – 1 Cor. 1:8-10

### The Call of God #7

Earl was a salesman who lived in New England a generation ago. In addition to being a personable, friendly man, he was also quite ingenious. World War 2 had demonstrated the versatility and potential of plastics in our country. After the War ended, Earl began to experiment in his homemade laboratory and came up with a softer, more pliable plastic that he dubbed Poly T. Earl began to make some products with his newfound discovery and he was very pleased with how they worked. But Earl's genius didn't stop at his invention of this new kind of plastic. No, Earl's winsome personality led to yet another innovation that eventually made a profound impact on our country. You see, Earl loved to be with people. He loved to fellowship with others in society. So he thought of a way to combine the product that he had developed with his natural love to be around people. Earl decided that he wouldn't sell his product in stores, lined up on shelves with other products. No, Earl would form parties, social gatherings where people could get together and eat and talk and, of course, buy his products. That was Earl S. Tupper's dream. And during the 50's in our country, his dream exploded until that Poly T plastic with which Earl formed kitchen containers has become a common household world. There are probably few of us in this Sanctuary who have not heard of Earl's Tupperware. But what really distinguished Earl's Tupperware from so many other similar products was his Tupperware parties where people were drawn together to fellowship around his products. And now there are countless other companies who try to market their products in a similar fashion because of their recognition of our natural desire for social interaction and fellowship.

God made Adam to be a social creation. After Adam had examined and named all of members of the animal kingdom and had not found a creature that was really suitable to meet his social needs, God said "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Gen. 2:18) It is interesting to note that this is the first time in the Bible where God said something was not good. After every day of creation, God had summarized His work by declaring it to be good. After the final day of creation, God declared all that He had made to be very good. But now when God saw Adam without any outlet for his innate social desires, the Creator said it is not good for the man to be alone.

God has called us into fellowship. The primary and foundational source of fellowship is to be with Him as our creator. But there is also a need that we each have for fellowship with other human beings of like mind and faith as well.

We have been looking at various calls that God offers to his children during these past Sunday mornings. We have already seen God's call to salvation, His call to holiness, the divine call to be God's

children, the call to service and God's call to peace. Last week we looked at our call from darkness into light from 1 Peter 2. Now this morning we want to look at God's call into fellowship. The Apostle Paul speaks of this call in the opening paragraphs of his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle to the Corinthians. We just read this passage together in our morning Scripture reading. In this passage we see both arenas of fellowship that are so important to a fulfilling Christian life mentioned. Let's look at these 2 arenas of fellowship that God has called each of us into as His children.

**First of all**, let's look at our call into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Look at this calling with me again as seen clearly in 1 Cor. 1:9:

<sup>9</sup> God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Now why is this call into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ so critical in our lives? The call into fellowship with Christ is necessary both because of our spiritual condition and because of our spiritual need.

The Bible makes it very clear that we are naturally born in a state of alienation from our Creator. The first consequence of sin entering the world was the separation of the human race from fellowship with God. Before Adam and Eve sinned, the Bible says that God would come down on a daily basis and walk with them during the cool of the evening in the Garden of Eden. There was open and continuing fellowship between the Creator and the 2 individuals whom He had formed in His own likeness and image. But immediately following Adam and Eve's willful disobedience against God eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there was a barrier hindering fellowship with God. When God came down during the cool of the evening as was His practice, Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves from the presence of God. Sin had caused a breach in their fellowship with God.

Now each of us is born in a state of alienation from God because of the sin nature that we inherit from our original parents. Romans 5:12 states this very clearly:

RO 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--

Our sinful nature that we are all born with leads us to transgress against God's laws and commandments when we reach an age of conscious choice. And the sins that we commit hinder our fellowship with God. God, being perfect in His holiness, cannot look with favor upon sin. Sin is totally opposed to His very nature. Sin then puts up a barrier hindering fellowship with God. So the condition of our birth makes a call into fellowship with God necessary because in this life fellowship with God doesn't just naturally happen – there is the barrier of sin that must be overcome for us to have fellowship with God.

But the call into fellowship is also necessary because of a spiritual need that we all have. God originally created human beings in His own likeness and image so that He might have fellowship with them. Fellowship with God is at the very core of our life purpose. Until fellowship with our Creator is realized in our life, we have an emptiness, a void, a feeling that something is missing. People of all generations have recognized this fact. The wisest man who ever lived wrote almost 3,000 years ago that God has set eternity in the hearts of men. Perhaps the greatest theologian who ever lived admitted in his confessions over 1,500 years ago that God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in our Creator. Every single person has a place in his or her innermost being that has been made for God to fill. Until fellowship with God is realized, there is an emptiness, an inexplicable void.

Now people try to fill this void in an endless variety of ways. Most often people assume that they need something to make them happy in order to fill this void. Because the void brings a discontentness, an emptiness, a lack of purpose into their lives, they jump to the conclusion that unhappiness or lack of meaning in life is their problem. If they could only find something to make them happy or if they could only find some purpose that would bring meaning and fulfillment to their lives, then their lives would be complete, then they would be happy. So because material things often bring a temporary joy and happiness to us, many think that accumulating more and more material goods will fill this void. If they could only get enough material goods, then they finally would be content. Because a promotion often brings a temporary feeling of worth and satisfaction to us, many think that by becoming more and more successful in the business world they will feel more fulfilled as people. So they work long, hard hours and pull every string that they can to get promotion after promotion thinking all the while that someday they are going to finally be content. Because a new romantic relationship often brings a temporary feeling of joy and exhilaration, many think that by finding just the right soul mate in life they will finally feel contented and loved. So they go from relationship to relationship, thinking that someday they are going to find Mr. or Mrs. Right who will bring wholeness to them as a person. The problem with each of these attempts and the countless others that people try is that people are trying to put square pegs into a round hole. That void, that emptiness that is felt inside was designed to be filled with fellowship with our Creator. Until fellowship with God is realized, we will never be truly content. Until a personal relationship with our Creator is found, we will never have the confidence that we have achieved our created purpose in life.

I remember reading an anecdote from the life of Winston Churchill. The British statesman was walking out of the House of Commons when he met another politician hurrying in late. "Has the Home Secretary spoken yet?" the late man asked breathlessly. "Yes, he has been speaking for half an hour" Churchill replied.

“Well, what is he talking about” the late man asked wanting to be brought up to speed. “I don’t know,” Churchill answered. “He hasn’t told us yet.”

Politicians often develop the knack of talking on and on without saying much. I shouldn’t be too critical here because preachers can develop the same habit. And many people live their lives like this. They go on year after year without ever coming to any purpose in life. They just put in time on this earth.

The person who experiences true fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ doesn’t need to wrestle with his or her created purpose. That inner void has been filled. There is a peace and contentment inside.

Happily God has made the provision so that we might have a personal relationship with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to this earth to take care of the sin problem. Jesus came to this earth to remove that barrier that hindered our fellowship with God. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 2:14-18 speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ:

EPH 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

God has called us into fellowship with Himself. He has provided the means to this fellowship. And Paul wrote to those people in the church of Corinth that God is faithful. He will keep us strong until the end so that one day we will stand blameless before the throne of God and realize the fellowship into which we have been called for all eternity in heaven.

**But now we must move also to a 2<sup>nd</sup> arena of fellowship.** Our fellowship with God opens the door to another arena of fellowship that we also need as human beings – namely fellowship with one another. Notice how Paul follows his statement that God has called us into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. READ 1 Cor. 1:8-10:

<sup>8</sup> He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1CO 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

It is not happenstance that Paul follows up his statement that we have been called into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ with an appeal to the members of the church at Corinth to be united in mind and

thought. In other words, to have fellowship with one another. It is because of God's calling us into fellowship with Himself that we can also realize the joy of fellowship with each other as well.

We have been created as social beings. We experience joy and fulfillment as we work together with other people towards a common goal.

Someone has defined fellowship as 2 fellows in one ship. If 2 people are in a canoe, they will only make good progress if they coordinate their paddling. They, of course, must be paddling in the same direction in order to make satisfactory progress. If they sit facing each other, both paddling in opposite directions, they are just going to tire themselves out and become frustrated with each other. If they paddle in the same direction, but at different speeds, they are going to be Bonnie and Clyde canoers going from bank to bank. But if they paddle in the same direction and coordinate their paddling to the same speed, they will be able to make the best progress, going straight down the river.

The greatest fellowship is found in the achievement of a common goal. Jesus Christ has given that goal to us in the great commission. I heard a statement at the Moody Pastor's Conference a couple of months ago that I thought was so good that I wrote it down. The Preacher said that the church is the only club in the world that exists for those who are not its members. That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Now we can't scrutinize the analogy too far because the church by its very nature is not a club but an organism, the living body of Christ. But when you stop to think about it, there are many clubs that exist in the world testifying to the fact that humans are social beings who crave fellowship with one another. But those clubs are all formed for the benefit of their members so that members have special privileges to play golf, or talk about literature, or work on their physical fitness, etc. These clubs are formed around a common interest of the members and exist for the members. The church has been formed by Christ in part for those who are not its members – so that the church can spread the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet heard the fact that Jesus came so that they might be able to have fellowship with God. And the interesting thing that happens is that as the members of the church are brought together in the unity and purpose of their common goal to spread the gospel, they achieve a fellowship that is not found any other place in the whole world. There is a unity, there is a bond, there is a fellowship that the body of Christ experiences that is second only to the intimate relationship that we can have with our Creator Himself. So individuals that having differing personal interests and differing personalities and differing abilities are brought together in a unity of purpose which produces a unique fellowship.

Several years ago there was a promoter who brought together the world's 3 best tenors in one concert. This was huge news in the world of classical music. Jose Carreras, Placido Domingo, and Luciano Pavarotti would all be together on the same stage, singing together in the same concert. A reporter for the

Atlantic Monthly was sent out to cover this concert for the November edition of his magazine. And as the reporter was interviewing the 3 tenors together, it was obvious as he kept trying to press the issue of these 3 men each being touted as the best tenor in the world all singing together that he was trying to fan the flame of these men competing against each other on stage. The reporter even appeared to be somewhat chagrined when the 3 answered each question without any obvious signs of jealousy or envy whatsoever. Finally, after the reporter tried once again to play the competition card for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, Domingo said to him: "You just don't understand. When singing, you have to put all of your concentration into opening your heart to the music. You just can't be rivals when you're together making music."

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth because they weren't making very melodic music. Divisions had arisen within the church. Factions were warring against each other. Criticism and back-biting were being whispered amongst the small groups in the lobby. They had forgotten the fact that God had called them into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the barrier of sin had been removed, they could have a new and intimate relationship with their Creator and Savior. And this fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ would be evidenced in their unity of mind and thought and fellowship with each another. As they joined together in the common purpose of fulfilling the great commission, they would experience a joy of fellowship with one another in Christ.

When Louis the IV was a young boy growing up in France the Royal family employed one of the best teachers in the land to instruct him on the ways of royalty. When the teacher arrived the first thing that he did was to give the young prince a purple tunic. "Your grace," he said, "I cannot give you orders, for I am but a commoner. How can a commoner command royalty? But I am giving you this purple tunic. And every time I see you doing something unbecoming of the royal prince, I am just going to point to the purple robe. This will remind you that you represent France. It will remind you that it is for France that many of your countrymen have died. I will not make my appeal to you, your prince. I will make my appeal to the purple."

We must never forget who we represent and what his purpose for us is. If we have dedicated our lives to being a committed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, we represent Him in all that we do or say. We have been called into fellowship with Him. It is his purpose and desire that we grow into an intimate relationship with him as we grow and mature in our faith. We have also been called into fellowship with one another. It is his purpose that we help one another grow and mature in faith and that we join together in the common purpose of spreading the glorious good news of His saving grace into this community and throughout the world. What a glorious privilege and responsibility it is to be called into fellowship with God and his people.