

CHRISTIAN KOINONIA

1 John 1:1-10

Key Verse: 1:3

"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."

In the ancient time, there were many kinds of classes and fraternities and sororities and leagues and associations and unions and so on. But there was no fellowship. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, the word "fellowship" was very unfamiliar to people's ears. Through Jesus' coming, Christians began to use the word "fellowship." These days, there are many fellowships. In 1 John chapter 1, the word "fellowship" is repeated four times (3,3,6,7), and it has a special meaning in the Bible. Therefore, when we say "fellowship," its real meaning cannot be grasped as it was signified. So, instead of using the word "fellowship," we want to use the word as it is in Greek, "**koinonia**." Christian koinonia has such a deep meaning that we cannot explain all its meaning in this limited space. The word "relationship" is the basic thought of koinonia, and koinonia is a broad sense of relationship. Let's think about Christian koinonia.

First, the bad influence of Gnostics.

In the early days of Christianity, there was a glory and a splendor, a magnificence and a radiance; in other words, through Jesus' death and resurrection, Christians had the flame of devotion, the thrill of world salvation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But after around 80 years, when John wrote 1 John in Ephesus, Christianity had become habitual, traditional and half-hearted. What is more, they became like old wineskins (Lk 5:37). There was a serious problem. There were many false teachers within the church. They were called Gnostics. In nature, they were similar to modern dispensationalists, who say, "The world mission command is only given to the Eleven disciples, not to all of us." The influence of Gnosticism was great. Their theory was that spirit is good and matter is evil. As a result, they denied the incarnation of Jesus Christ. They thought Jesus was a phantom figure or an appearance, and that he had no real humanness. If he is body, then he is evil. This simple theory affected the early Christians and made them doubt the grace and truth of Jesus' incarnation (Jn 1:14). Finally, they began to doubt the love of God.

The Bible clearly teaches us that Jesus is perfect God and perfect man, but he is sinless (Heb 4:15). Even though he is God, Jesus came to this world. When he came to this world, Jesus renounced all his power and glory and honor of the kingdom of God. The grace and truth of Jesus' incarnation help us see Jesus' complete divine humbleness, and the unconditional love of God in him. Especially, Jesus' fellowship with all kinds of sinners is the heavenly sunlight and is full of grace and truth to all mankind (Jn 1:14). When we do not know the grace and truth of Jesus' incarnation, we cannot realize the love of God. When we don't realize the love of God, we don't realize our parents' love. When one has no love of God in his heart, he doesn't know how to love his wife and children. When we do not know the grace and truth of Jesus' incarnation, we

remain as proud and unthankful people. The Gnostics' theory cleverly refutes the love of God, who gave his one and only Son to save men from their sins. They denied Jesus' preaching and healing ministry, his death on the cross for the sin of the world, and his glorious resurrection. When Christians were deceived by the Gnostics, they lost their first love for Jesus and became cold. When they lost their first love for Jesus, their faith became lukewarm. They had no interest in the work of God. Gradually, they began to love the world. Gnostics caused many Christians to stumble.

Second, who Jesus Christ really is (1-2).

This is the reason that John wrote about Jesus, that he is a perfect God and a perfect man. Look at verse 1. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." This verse is similar to Revelation 1:1-2. It says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." All these verses testify that Jesus is God or that Jesus is the Son of God. John was one of Jesus' disciples. He lived the common life with Jesus for three years. At the Last Supper, Jesus talked about the betrayer among the Twelve. Then John leaned on the breast of Jesus with great confidence, in order to express that he was not a betrayer, but the most beloved disciple (Jn 13:23). So John could say, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched," that is, he saw and touched the mark of the nails on Jesus' hands. The fourth gospel, John 1:1-2, summarizes who Jesus is very clearly. It says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." In the last part of 1 John 1:1, "the Word of life" is Jesus Christ in light of John 1:1. Jesus is God. Jesus is the Creator God. Without him nothing was made that has been made (Jn 1:3). Jesus is God. He came to this world to save sinners. Through Jesus we have eternal life. Look at verse 2. "The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us." In short, the purpose of God's coming down to the world of sin is to have koinonia and to save men from their sins.

Third, Christian koinonia.

When Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees scorned Jesus saying, "He is eating with tax collectors and sinners!" (Mk 2:16) But Jesus had koinonia with tax collectors and sinners with great joy because they received the word of God and repented. Jesus wanted to raise 12 disciples as spiritual leaders of the future world. Once, Jesus taught them the meaning of his crucifixion and resurrection. But their response was very poor. Right after they heard about Jesus' suffering, death on the cross and resurrection on the third day, they began to argue with a political theme, "who is the greatest?" But Jesus did not rebuke them because of their unlearning minds. Rather, Jesus explained kindly that a truly great is a man of life-giving spirit. Jesus said in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his

life as a ransom for many." Jesus' common life with his disciples was the beginning of practical Christian koinonia.

The happiness of Christian koinonia is unutterable. Christian koinonia made the wicked world a paradise. Acts 4:32-35 say, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." When God took a human form and lived for a while on earth, they saw the grace and truth of Jesus Christ and all their selfishness and sorrow and future security anxiety were gone and they were unutterably happy. They were happy to share everything. Fathers wanted to spend time with their children. Mothers wanted to teach the Bible to their children and give them divine instructions. Grandparents were happy to take care of their grandchildren; even during eating time they did not put their grandchildren off of their laps. Thus, grandparents and grandchildren ate together. When grandchildren ate a lot, grandparents also ate a lot, even though they were old. Christian koinonia is based on Jesus' fellowship with all kinds of sinners.

What does "koinonia" mean in the New Testament? "Koinonia" mainly means participation. Paul said in Philippians 1:29, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him...." When Paul said this, he was happy to participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus Christ. As we know, St. Peter was the top disciple with a big mouth. But he denied Jesus three times at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Later, he came to know the meaning of Jesus' incarnation, his earthly Messianic ministry, and his death and resurrection. He was happy to participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus Christ. So he said, "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1Pe 4:13). Paul said in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...." St. John participated in the suffering of Jesus. John said in Revelation 1:9, "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Peter said, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed..." (1Pe 5:1). Christian koinonia is compared to the vine and branch relationship. When we have a vine and branch relationship, we can have koinonia with Jesus. We can have koinonia with other Christian friends. We participate in anything for the sake of Jesus. Christian koinonia is real participation, whether loss or gain.

Fourth, the power of Christian koinonia (3-4).

As Jesus said, those who are changed in the word of God are truly brothers and sisters and mothers (Mk 3:31-35). Fallen men think that they can make money and live in this world forever with their loved ones. But it does not work like that. How can we have Christian koinonia? First of all, we must have koinonia with God. When we read Genesis, we find that Enoch had koinonia with God for 300 years (Ge 5:21-24). Then their koinonia developed so deep and wide that God could not leave him on the earth. So he was taken up to heaven without experiencing death. Christian koinonia stems from the love of God. Selfish Christians never experience that God is with us. Nietzsche said, "God is dead," because he was dead in his total depravity. But those Christians who have koinonia with God can pray together even though their numbers are just two or three (Mt 18:20). The absolute minority can conquer the whole world. Once, the British Empire was morally very low because she became easygoing as a result of exploitation of colonial peoples. Then seven students at Cambridge University prayed in Christian koinonia. We call them the "Cambridge Seven." Through them, the British Empire was mysteriously restored from moral corruption. Here we learn that when we love God, we not only love others, but also we can have a common goal for which we can give our lives. Last Friday it was raining heavily. But our Young Missionaries began to repair one of our fellow member's roof. Nobody told them to repair the member's roof. But they went, and in the rain, put in insulation and made a new roof. It seemed to be a small matter. But those who built the new roof of one of our members are all those who have koinonia with God. They are true friends with God. They are indeed the stewards of God's world. Christian koinonia produces stewardship, a sense of responsibility. Above all, Christian koinonia destroys the selfishness of fallen man.

Fifth, Christian koinonia comes from the word of God.

We must know that we can have Christian koinonia when our message is from the word of God. Acts 8:25 says, "When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages." 1 Thessalonians 1:8a says, "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere." 2 Thessalonians 3:1 says, "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you." The main point of the word of God is the kingdom of God. The word of God, that is, the gospel, is the word of the cross. 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Most of all, we must know that the gospel is the word of life. When we have the word of life we have the most precious thing in the world. When we have the word of life, we can have Christian koinonia.

Sixth, Christians' lifestyle (5-7).

Christians must live in the light. As we know well, there is light and there is darkness. Many people live a double life, sometimes they live in the light, sometimes in the darkness. Therefore, the responsibility of the Christian is to guide those who are living in the darkness to the marvelous light of Jesus. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

In this generation, people do not talk about why something happened or what caused an event to happen. As a result, the darkness overwhelms the minds of people who do not know "why?" We must know

that darkness stands for the chaos of life without God. As we know well, 100 percent of those who live in darkness crave for immoral lives. And immoral lives make people's souls very sick. These days unlimited human freedom has become the social consensus of this country. But human freedom makes people very selfish. Selfishness is connected with lovelessness.

But Christians who have koinonia with Christ must walk in the light. It does not necessarily mean that we sleep during the night with the light on. "Walk in the light" does not necessarily mean that we hold a torch in our right hand and run. "Walk in the light" means that we live in Jesus, especially we live in the love of God. "Walk in the light" ultimately means that we participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus. "Walk in the light" means that we must have a common goal and live with a life-giving spirit. "Walk in the light" means that we must trust our future security to God and give first priority to God; then we expect God's blessing. This is the meaning of walking in the light.

Seventh, repentance and Christian koinonia (8-9).

Look at verses 8-9. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." These days, most people think that they have no concept of sin because their consciences have been seared by a hot iron and they have become numb like a leper and don't feel sin. Even if they don't feel a prick of conscience or sensitivity toward sin in their minds, they should not deceive themselves by thinking they are righteous. These days many witches help young people to sear their conscience and make their guilty feeling numb. We cannot say they are good counselors. They are responsible for the blood of those whom they counsel. On the other hand, if we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Look at verse 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

May God richly bless you and help you grow up to be a member of Christian koinonia.