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**Relationship & Fellowship**

Alright, today we return to our Basics class and a very important distinction is made today in point 12 between our relationship with God and our fellowship with God; probably one of the most misunderstood distinctions in all Christianity that wreaks havoc on peoples lives. So we want to be very clear that there is a distinction between having a relationship with God and having fellowship with God. That's the main idea captured in point 12, notice,

12. Every true child of God possesses eternal life by personal faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross (John 5:24), and, being justified (Rom. 5:1-2), sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2) and sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), is safe and secure for all eternity (Rom. 8:35-39). However, a Christian can through sin, temporarily lose his fellowship, joy, power, testimony and reward, and incur the Father's discipline (1 Cor. 3:11-15; Heb. 12:7-10). Fellowship with God may, however, be restored by confession of one's sins to God (1 John 1:9).

What do we mean by “every true child of God”? We mean every individual who has exercised faith alone in Christ alone. Let's look at “faith” because this is probably the most confusing term. Too often this word is thought to refer to the opposite of knowledge, if you don't know it you believe it succinctly satisfies the pagan dichotomy. Actually the term begins in the OT as a term closely related to the term “truth” which in turn was closely related to the term “mother.” Isn't it interesting that the word faith ultimately is traced back to the word for mother? The reason is because a mother was looked upon as truthful, she was trustworthy, she was reliable, she could be depended upon. And so the OT word for faith referred to reliance on something trustworthy, a firm dependence upon a reliable object, like a mother. So it was a very firm reliance upon something true. To see just how

strong faith is, the word faith is used in the OT to describe the giant pillars of Solomon's Temple, they were what held the entire structure up, they were firm, reliable, stable. And so when you think of faith you are to think of a firm reliance on something, a strength due to the reliability of the object. So faith is not something weak, that's the fallacy in our culture, the fallacy that faith is just a guess and knowledge is something strong. Incorrect, that's a pagan dichotomy. The idea of faith in Scripture is something strong, something reliable, a support and the reason it's strong is because its object is trustworthy, like a mother.

Now I've mentioned the object of faith and that's something else we want also want to look at. Here the question is, faith in what? What is the object of my faith? We have to look at this because faith doesn't save; faith never saved anyone; faith isn't a savior, faith is my firm reliance on some object that saves. So what am I firmly relying on to save me? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ saves. He is the savior, not my faith. I put my faith in Him. He is the reliable object I am depending upon. And upon Him alone, it's not faith in Jesus + baptism, Jesus + confession, Jesus + a prayer, Jesus + repentance, Jesus + the church or Jesus + works, it's not even a faith that works in Jesus + nothing. It's faith in Jesus + nothing. He alone saves, Jesus + baptism working together do not save, Jesus + confession of my sin is not what saves, Jesus + my prayer is not a saving formula. It's Jesus alone who saves.

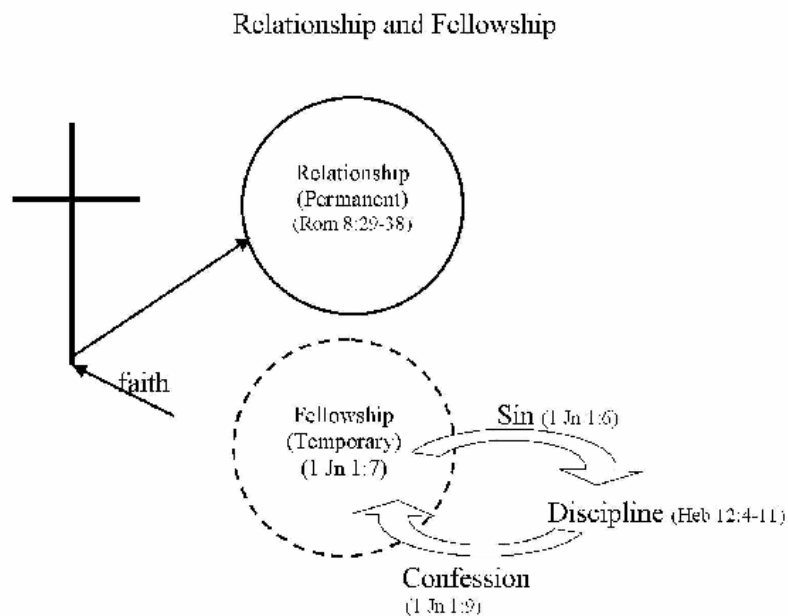
Now I need to know who this Jesus is; there needs to be some content to this Jesus, namely who He is and what He has done. I must know His person and His work. Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is God and man, we say this by the statement of Chalcedon, Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity in one person without confusion forever. He's got to be undiminished deity, wholly God, He's got to be true humanity, a genuine human, He's got to be one person and not two, He's got to be without confusion, that is the divine and human natures not mingling, the Creator-creature distinction intact in this one person, and He's got to be this "forever," meaning since the incarnation and forevermore. If you don't have those things you don't have the Jesus Christ of the Bible. So you need to know who He is, His Person, and you also need to know what He has done, His work. What did Jesus Christ do? Our statement says He died on the cross and I'd add there and rose again on the third day. He died, but not for His own sin, He took our sin upon Himself, all of it, the sin of the entire world, and He

died for it all to satisfy the just wrath of God once for all and having satisfied it He rose again. God raised Him from the dead since death could not hold One who died willingly for the sins of others.

So when you exercise faith alone in Christ alone you are not saying, “Oh, I hope Jesus saves me.” You are saying, “I have firm reliance in Jesus Christ, the God-man, to save me, the One who died for me and rose again, I am resting on Him who is stable, who is truth.” Jesus said that didn’t He? He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except through Me; three things, I am the way means He is the path, He is the road, I am the truth means He is genuine, He is reliable, and I am the life means He is the root and ground of all quality existence. And apart from Him there is no way, there is no truth and there is no life. Jesus intended to say, I am the only way, I am the only truth and I am the only life and therefore apart from Him there is no other way to the Father, there is no other truth and there is no other life; only lies and death. So Jesus Christ who died and rose again is the object who saves me through faith.

By faith alone in Christ alone we become children of God. Turn to John 1:12 and we’ll look at a few verses in John’s Gospel to this effect, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,” I take it that receiving Him is an equivalent to believing in Him. And through believing in Him we become children of God. Children is a familial term, we enter a new family, we have our earthly family, our biological family, but at the moment we receive Christ we become part of a heavenly family, a spiritual family. This terminology is relational. It states a relationship that we have and of course, family relationships are permanent, they can never be lost. As a member of an earthly family you are permanently the child of a mother and father, you are biologically their child and nothing you say or do can ever change that. In the same way you are a member of a heavenly family and you are permanently the child of God and nothing you say or do can ever change that. “To those who received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.”<sup>i</sup> A birth he says in verse 13 that is “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” God is the sole author of this new being that we have become through believing in His name.

Now as I have stated this is a relationship and relationships are permanent, you become a child of God at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone and therefore we are already talking about eternal security, the idea that we can never lose our salvation. And we have a diagram to depict this.



We'll develop this diagram as we go through the lesson. But observe we have the cross and that depicts the person and work of Christ. At the moment of faith in Him we are placed in the top circle, a permanent relationship with God through Christ, we are children of God, the top circle is a solid line to indicate that we cannot get out of this relationship, no matter what we do, no matter what sin we do we cannot get out of this relationship, we are in the family of God permanently.

We have certain passages cited in our statement that indicate eternal security and I want to take you to some of these. The first one is John 5:24 and I cited that one because it says we have eternal life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Notice the verb "has" the one who believes "has eternal life," a present tense, he has eternal life right now, he doesn't have to wait for it, he has it right

now as a present possession. And not only that but Jesus goes on to say, “and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” “has passed” is a perfect tense and means a past completed action with ongoing results, he isn’t passing out of death and into life but it’s an action that already took place at the moment of belief, with ongoing results, that is you pass out of death into life and you remain out of death and in life. You have eternal life and you will always have eternal life. That’s eternal security! And as Ryrie always pointed out, how could Jesus call it eternal life if we could lose it? Wouldn’t it be temporal life? Life until we next sinned? Clearly the very fact that Christ says we have eternal life and have passed out of death and into life indicates we can never lose it. So we have eternal security proved from the fact that we have eternal life.

Second, we have been justified, Romans 5:1. Romans 1-3 are dealing with sin, man’s problem, Romans 4-5 are dealing with justification, God’s solution to our problem, actually lets back up to Rom 4. Notice verse 1. “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” <sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. <sup>5</sup>But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, <sup>6</sup>just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:” Alright, faith and works are opposite. If you work for something you deserve pay, but faith is receiving something that you did not work for. And righteousness comes through faith, not works. You can’t earn righteousness with God; you can only receive righteousness through faith. Now this righteousness, and you notice in verse 3, it is not infused into your heart, you don’t become righteous. It’s expressed very interestingly there in verse 3 which is a quote from Gen 15:6, so justification is by faith in both the OT and the NT. Nothing changes from testament to testament in how a man is justified before God. It is always through faith, “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” The idea of the crediting is a mathematical calculation. In other words, you might look at it like this: if we are in Adam, dead in transgressions and sins then we are –Righteousness. What justification does it takes us not to a 0, that would be forgiveness, justification is not just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned, justification is just-as-if-I’d-perfectly-obeyed, that’s taking

us all the way to +Righteousness. Where does this righteousness come from? It's not coming from us. It's coming from God. But it's not God giving us His attribute of righteousness. God never gives us any of His attributes. He gives us the righteousness developed from the positive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity. His righteousness is credited to us. And it takes us from -Righteousness to +Righteousness with God. It changes our standing with Him. That's what justification is all about. It's not a change in our nature; it is a change in our standing. It is a legal verdict and the verdict is not just as if I'd never sinned, that would make you a 0, neither righteous nor unrighteous, just in a state of innocence, but justification is saying just as if I had perfectly obeyed. This is why the Heidelberg Catechism stated it this way. "God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never had nor committed any sin, *and myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me;*" That is eternal security! You are not merely looked upon as having committed no sin, but as if you yourself had accomplished all the obedience Christ rendered for you. So justification is a court verdict defining your standing with God, a verdict of righteousness that can never be overturned for there is no double jeopardy in the court of God. You can never be brought into His court over the same offense. How does Paul put it elsewhere? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 5:1, notice the tenses in this verse as Paul comes to his conclusion. "Therefore, having been justified by faith," past, present or future? Past, it's done, it's complete, the legal verdict has been passed at the moment of faith, at which moment "we have" present tense "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," now how marvelous is this, you have peace with God, there is no longer enmity but peace, now you can relax and rest in this confidence. Verse 2, "through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." This is our standing with God, our position, our permanent standing with God, the top circle, eternal security! So we are eternally secure by virtue of our possession of eternal life which is by faith and by virtue of the declaration of righteousness which is by faith.

Now a third line of evidence showing eternal security is we have been sanctified. Turn to 1 Cor 1:2. There are three phases of sanctification - positional, experiential and ultimate -the one we are talking about here is

positional. Again it has to do with our standing before God that is attained at the moment of faith. The word “sanctified” just means “set apart.” So it’s saying we have been set apart from the world at the moment of faith in Christ for God’s purposes and God’s glory. The problem at Corinth of course was that though they had been set apart for this purpose they were not fulfilling this purpose. Nevertheless, they had been set apart. 1 Cor 1:2, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours.” Notice the tense, “those who have been sanctified.” Is that a past, present or future tense? It’s a past tense. This calls attention to their standing as one that is sanctified. And if the carnal Corinthians held this standing then boy, let me tell you, every believer has this standing with God. Don’t you find it ironic that the one epistle that addresses the nastiest believers in the NT says “you have been sanctified?” If you read just a list of the sins these people were involved in you’d never guess they were believers; they were liars, they were fornicators, they were homosexuals, they were thieves, they were drunks, they were idolaters, anything but believers, right? Wrong, the text says, “you were sanctified...you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” So you can either adjust the text to fit your theology or adjust your theology to fit the text.

Alright, a fourth line of evidence for eternal security is we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. Turn to Eph 1:13-14. This passage is probably the greatest description of the Triune God’s plan of salvation. In Eph 1:4-6 the Father’s works in salvation, in vv 7-12 the Sons work in salvation and in vv 13-14 the Spirit’s work in salvation, so the whole passage really argues for eternal security but we’re just focusing on the Spirit’s work in salvation. Verse 13, “In Him [the Son], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” you’ve got to hear in order to believe “—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup>who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory.” Notice you “were sealed,” past tense, with a view to the redemption, which is the resurrection body. So you were sealed at the moment you believed and you remain sealed until the day of the resurrection. The seal? What is this all about? In the ancient world it was for security purposes and obviously impacts security of salvation. The Holy Spirit seals us in Christ, in the top circle, until the day of redemption. During



the meantime Eph 4:30 says we can grieve the Holy Spirit who sealed us. So I take it that we grieve the Spirit by sinning, and yet the sinning does not break the seal, it grieves the seal, who is the Holy Spirit. So we are eternally secure because we have eternal life, we are justified, we are sanctified and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Finally there are great verses or passages that teach eternal security. For example, turn to Romans 8, arguably the greatest passage on redemption in Scripture, it runs a close race with the Eph 1 passage. Here we find what theologians call the golden chain of redemption. It's a chain, a linkage of certain things the Father has done for us that assure our redemption. And the argument is that if you have one link of the chain then you have all the links on the chain, they all go together as a package deal. After the great promise of Rom 8:28 he says in verse 29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." There are five things there and if you have one of them you have all five of them. If you are foreknown you are predestined, if you are predestined you are called, if you are called you are justified and if you are justified you are glorified. The first one is foreknow and obviously that doesn't mean foresight, in the sense of omniscience. Why do I say that? Because God only foreknew a subset of the human race here. Yet in His omniscience He knows every member of the human race. So the foreknew is something exclusive to those who would be saved, to those who would be personally involved with Him, the word has the idea of personal involvement, closeness, intimacy. The second word is predestined and predestination doesn't have so much to do with coming to salvation in Christ as it has to do with the destiny of believers being marked out beforehand, all those God foreknew, that subset would have as their ultimate destiny conformation to Jesus Christ, a destiny marked out beforehand with Him. The third word is called and the calling is what goes forth in time for this subset of people who will respond to the gospel message, they are called through the gospel message, given ears to hear and eyes to see. The fourth word is justified and that we've already covered, it refers to the legal declaration of righteousness that occurs at the moment the call is responded to. And the fifth word, glorified, they will be glorified, resurrected unto the likeness of Christ, freed from the presence of sin. Put all that together and



you have a package of eternal security. So strong is this package that Paul says in verse 31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup>who is the one who condemns?” There’s nobody left! “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” <sup>37</sup>But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The text speaks for itself, you are eternally secure! Even if we are faithless He is faithful. No one, including yourself can take themselves out of Christ. As Jesus said in John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup>and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup>“My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand.” Absolute eternal security.

So the first part of our statement is designed to argue for the believers eternal security in the top circle, we are children of God through personal faith in Jesus Christ, we now have a new relationship in a new family that is a permanent relationship, having eternal life, being justified, sanctified and sealed with the Holy Spirit, having been foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified, who can separate us from the love of Christ? No one and no thing.

“However,” and this brings us to the second part of the statement, “a Christian can through sin, temporarily lose his fellowship, joy, power, testimony and reward, and incur the Father's discipline (1 Cor. 3:11-15; Heb. 12:7-10). Fellowship with God may, however, be restored by confession of one's sins to God (1 John 1:9).” All we’re saying is that the relationship can never be lost but the fellowship within that relationship can be lost. This is

typically signified by a lower circle that depicts fellowship. Just as in an earthly family relationship a child can lose fellowship with his father by disobedience so in the heavenly family relationship a child of God can lose fellowship with God through disobedience to His word. This loss of fellowship affects our joy, our effective living, our testimony to others and our future reward, but it does not affect our relationship with God.

Now this is where people have gotten confused. The difficulty has always been harmonizing the kinds of passages we just looked at, that are very strong on eternal security, with passages that seem to say you can lose your salvation. Think of a passage like Gal 5:4, "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Taken out of context it sounds like its saying you can lose your salvation. Severed from Christ, well then I'm lost! But in the prior context it is believers who were getting circumcised and by doing so they were being severed from Christ's help in living the Christian life because they were no longer living by grace but by works. Paul says you have fallen from grace. The word fallen is a nautical term meaning to drift off course, they were drifting from grace. Grace is the means of living the Christian life, not works. So the passage has nothing to do with loss of salvation. It has to do with drifting from grace and being cut off from the grace to live the Christian life that comes through being in a close connection with Christ! Or take a passage like the controversial Hebrews 6:4-6, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup>and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." Taken out of context it sounds like a strong argument for loss of salvation, oh no, you can fall away. Yet if you read the prior verses Paul says the problem is they should be teachers by now but because they had become dull of hearing they needed to go back and review basic doctrine and move to advanced doctrine. If they didn't start making spiritual progress then they would eventually get themselves so hardened in sin it would be impossible for them to repent genuinely. So again it has nothing to do with loss of salvation, it has to do with a warning to believers that they can rebel and rebel to the point where they are so hardened in sin that they can't genuinely repent. And that will lead to an

unproductive Christian life. So we are convinced from Scripture that these passages and others like them depict the danger of losing fellowship with God and not our relationship with God. So these types of passages relate to the bottom circle not the top.

Now let's look at some of the things that can be lost through personal sin. Our statement says, "a Christian can through sin, temporarily lose his fellowship, joy, power, testimony and reward, and incur the Father's discipline (1 Cor. 3:11-15; Heb. 12:7-10)." Now sin, just to be clear, what kind of sin are we talking about here because there are three categories of sin; imputed sin, inherent sin and personal sin, all are contrary to God who is the standard, and anything contrary to what He has revealed as the standard is sin. Looking from the three standpoints, first, imputed sin. This is the legal crediting of Adam's sin to each member of the human race because of our participation in the first sin of Adam. Somehow we sinned in Him. Now this legal status is completely rectified at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone because we are imputed the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore imputed sin is no longer an issue for the believer. Legally the believer is not only sinless but He is now perfectly righteous. Second, inherent sin is the sin nature or flesh that we receive through our earthly father in the process of reproduction. This is passed from father to son, father to son and so forth. At the moment of faith alone in Christ the sin nature's power is defeated but the flesh is not eradicated. The Christian can now live by the flesh or live by the Spirit. If we set our minds on the things of the flesh then we will fulfill the lusts of the flesh, if we set our minds on the things of the Spirit then we will fulfill the desires of the Spirit. So the sin nature or the flesh, whatever you want to call it, is still an issue for the believer. But whereas before, when we were an unbeliever we had to obey it, now as a believer we do not have to obey it, we are set free from its power over us, though we can still submit to it to fulfill its desires. But is the sin nature a valid thing to confess to restore fellowship? No, we cannot confess our sin nature. Rather our sin nature is the source of our personal sin and we must wait for it to be removed at our resurrection. So the third category of sin is personal, and these are the overt and covert sins. They may be sins of the mental attitude or sins of the tongue. They may be strife or jealousy, both sins of mental attitude. Or they may be gossiping and maligning, both sins of the tongue. All personal sins issue forth from the sin nature which is why we will no longer sin only when we no longer have a sin nature. It is this third category of sin that is the subject of

our statement, “through sin” a Christian can “temporarily lose his fellowship.”<sup>ii</sup> Turn to 1 John 1. 1 John is the big book on tests of fellowship, tests to see whether you are in fellowship or not, it assumes the relationship, so fellowship is the issue. Notice 1 John 1:5, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another [God], and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” Now you’ll notice the first thing pointed out in verse 5 is that God is light, that is He is holy and it’s against His holiness that we judge our sin. And you see there’s a dichotomy, John is the great dichotomy writer, he’s dark and light, abiding and not abiding, you see the darkness and light motif real strong here, if we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we’re sinning, then we lie and do not practice the truth. Believers don’t always practice the truth, believers often practice lies and when they do they do not have fellowship with God. This word fellowship, *koinonia*, what is that all about? It’s about closeness of relationship. So loss of fellowship is loss of closeness in a relationship, it’s not loss of the relationship, its loss of closeness in the relationship. It’s like I said before, a father and a son, when the son disobeys the father the son still has a relationship with the father, but the son is out of fellowship with the father, the closeness is broken and that needs to be restored through confession. It’s the same way with our heavenly father, when you sin against Him you don’t lose the relationship you have with Him but you do lose fellowship, your closeness to Him, your mutual interests with Him are broken and need to be restored through confession. You’re not doing God’s will for your life. And that’s what we’re depicting by this bottom circle, when you sin you are outside the bottom circle.

Now the Bible describes this many, many ways, it says you are walking in darkness or walking in the light, you are walking by the flesh or walking by the Spirit, you are out of fellowship or in fellowship, you are abiding or not abiding, you are filled by the Spirit or not filled by the Spirit. All that talk is dichotomy, you either are or you are not, there is no both-and, there is no in-

between, no third position, you either are or you are not, so all those terms relate to fellowship within the relationship. And the issue is personal sin, personal sin is like gunk that gets in a pipe and stops it up and you can pile up a lot of gunk in between yourself and God and what you need to do is clean out the pipe. And all the time you don't clean it out and you build up all this gunk in your life you're not experiencing joy, you're not experiencing victorious living, you're experiencing agony and your experiencing death.

The way you clean out the pipe is you confess. Actually let's back up one step to conviction, you've got to be convicted that you've sinned. Conviction just means you're convinced, you may not be convinced you've sinned. We all need convincing sometimes and the way to be convinced is to have Scripture come to bear on the issue, the Scripture casts light on darkness and when it does it exposes the gunk, so when we are convicted of our sin then we confess it to God. You don't go to a priest in a confessional booth, it's none of their business, they can't forgive you, you didn't sin against them, you sinned against God. What did David say in his famous confessional Psalm? "Against You and You only have I sinned." That's important to grasp because confession isn't feeling sorry for your sin, lots of people feel sorry for their sin, sorry that they have to live with the consequences of their sin. But that's not confession, confession is bringing your sin up against the holiness of God and saying, I violated your holiness, my mental attitude of anger violated Your holiness, my maligning of so and so's character violated Your holiness. It's coming up to God and saying the same thing about your sin that God says about your sin. And when you do you're instantly restored to fellowship. So we have three steps if we break it down: we are convicted of our sin, we confess our sin and we are restored to fellowship. That's when we are back in the bottom circle and we are now in the light, we are abiding in Him, we are in fellowship, we are filled by means of the Spirit, the pipe has been cleaned out and now we are enjoying close association with God, enjoyment of life, and the fruit of the Spirit is produced through our lives. So when you sin the loss of fellowship is only temporary, if you confess it is restored. If you don't confess, let me alert you that this is a very bad idea. Christian's don't understand how serious it is to get out and stay out of fellowship. But what happens is you sin and you don't confess so you sin again and you don't confess that either and now you have two sins and then you sin again and you have three and this goes on and on until you have a whole pile of sins here, all this gunk in your life and every time you sin you're hardening your

heart to God, you're blinding yourself to the nature of God and it gets harder and harder to confess. This is a condition called deep depravity and your heart gets calloused to the things of God, insensitive and you start committing complex sin, which is overt and covert sins all mixed together into complex schemes - white collar crime, extremely dangerous, extremely manipulative, deep, deep secretive plans where you live in front of everybody one way and then you have a secret behind the scenes life where you are entertaining in your mental imagination and working out very evil ideas. And Christians can do this. There's nothing prohibiting them from doing this. Why can't they do this? So you don't want to get that far gone. That's what the Hebrews 6 passage is warning against, the dangers of getting caught up in a world of sin and becoming hardened to the point it's impossible for you to repent, not because genuine repentance won't be responded to by God, but because you'll never repent.

So the important thing is to confess your sin regularly, stay sensitive to the things of God, and when sin comes to your attention to confess it. But when you sin and get out of fellowship, God will discipline you in order to shock you out of your sin so you'll be convicted and confess. So that's why outside this bottom circle we put discipline. God loves you so much he won't let you run off and ruin your life as a believer. He uses physical sickness, He uses loss of joy and frustration, He uses all kinds of things to convict you of sin, to get your eyes back on Him so you'll confess and be restored to fellowship. It's one of those corollary truths to election, if you are His child then He will pursue you and pursue you and He'll never leave you alone and if you rebel and rebel and refuse to look at Him then He'll just kill you. Premature physical death, the sin unto death, can be found in Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira, you can find that in 1 Corinthians 11 because of the way they were taking communion, you can find that in 1 John 5, if a brother sins a sin unto death, you can find that in James 1. Lots of danger of premature physical death because you rejected the corrective nature of God's discipline

And if you stay out of fellowship what do you think that's going to do for your reward status? Take a look at 1 Cor 3:11. Can a believer, a genuine believer go through his whole Christian life and come out at the other end without any rewards? Some people really struggle with someone who professes to be a Christian but has no changed life (as far as they can tell). According to the Bible there will be Christians with no rewards, not even one. Yet Christians



don't want to believe this is possible. They'd rather make up their own theology on this point and ignore what God says. 1 Cor 3:11, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So these people have a foundation stone laid, Jesus Christ is their savior. Verse 12, the issue of rewards is the quality of building materials you use to build on the foundation, either things of the Spirit, "gold, silver, precious stones," or things of the flesh, "wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." The proposition is put out there that some men will have all their work burned up but will be saved.

So then, we have the relationship and that can never be lost, it's attained by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is secured by the fact that we are justified in the high court of heaven, we are sanctified, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. However, in the Christian life we can commit personal sin that causes temporary loss of fellowship, joy, rewards and victorious living that can incur the Father's discipline. When we are convicted of our sin and confess it to Him we are instantly restored to fellowship.

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<sup>i</sup> The infinitive "become" (Gk. – *γινωμαι*,) means "to experience a change in nature and so indicate entry into a new condition," become something by nature you were not before (BDAG, meaning 5a) as verse 13 goes on to indicate explicitly, "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

<sup>ii</sup> There is a positional forgiveness of all personal sins; past, present and future at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone indicated by John 13, but there is also an experiential forgiveness of personal sins when they are confessed which is a fresh application of the cross as indicated in 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1, 2.

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