

Emmaus Essentials
The London Baptist Confession of 1689
Chapter 27: Of the Communion of the Saints
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Chapter Outline taken from *ST 535 Baptist Symbolics Chapter Outlines* by Dr. Renihan

Introduction

This chapter speaks to what we call *fellowship*

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42, ESV)

The Biblical concept of fellowship involves more than coffee and donuts (though coffee and donuts are good)

I. Union with Christ is the basis for all communion

Para 1 - All saints that are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by his Spirit, and faith, although they are not made thereby one person with him, have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. (1 John 1:3; John 1:16; Philippians 3:10; Romans 6:5, 6; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Romans 1:12; 1 John 3:17, 18; Galatians 6:10)

- A. Union with Christ is the work of the Spirit by faith
 - 1. We are all united by the Spirit and through faith to Christ
- B. Deification of believers is denied
 - 1. Countering the mystical sects that were arising in the 1650's
- C. This union is directly related to Christ
 - 1. “have fellowship in his (Christ's) graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory”
 - 2. This is the basis of our communion or fellowship with one another

Support Texts

“that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3, ESV)

“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (John 1:16, ESV)

“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,” (Philippians 3:10, ESV)

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” (Romans 6:5-6, ESV)

D. They have communion (fellowship) with each other in gifts and graces.

1. We may not have much in common, but we have Christ!
2. The proof texts point to the theological and eschatological basis for our union with one another.
3. Gifts - Public Function
4. Graces - Private Function (friendship)

Support Texts

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16, ESV)

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7, ESV)

“So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” (1 Corinthians 3:21–23, ESV)

E. They have mutual obligations

1. See New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology - Koinonia
 - a) Eschatological - we have fellowship with Christ who is in heaven
 - b) Financial support - to help people who are in need
 - c) Calvin renders fellowship, “to give alms”
2. Fellowship is to help those who are need - to give alms to one another

Support Texts

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, ESV)

“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14, ESV)

“that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.” (Romans 1:12, ESV)

“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17, ESV)

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18, ESV)

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10, ESV)

II. The definition of these duties

Para 2 - Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities, and necessities; which communion, according to the rule of the gospel, though especially to be exercised by them, in the relation wherein they stand, whether in families, or churches, yet, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all the household of faith, even all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus; nevertheless their communion one with another as saints, doth not take away or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

(Hebrews 10:24, 25; Hebrews 3:12, 13; Acts 11:29, 30; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27; Acts 5:4; Ephesians 4:28)

A. Public and private circumstances

1. Fellowship in the worship of God - public
 - a) Fellowship involves sharing in the eschatological benefits of what we have in Christ
2. The performance of other spiritual services which tend to mutual edification - private
 - a) Conversations that we hold with one another, etc.

Support Texts

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV)

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:12-13, ESV)

3. There is charitable relief to be done

Support Text

“So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:29-30, ESV)

- B. This communion should extend in three ways:
 1. In families

- a) Families ought to participate in giving

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4, ESV)

2. In Churches

- a) Churches ought to participate in giving

Support Text

“For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:14–27, ESV)

3. To fellow Christians

- a) We ought to help those outside our local church, if possible

C. Not communism

1. “nevertheless their communion one with another as saints, doth not take away or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.”
2. Against some Anabaptists
3. This doctrine does not mean what belongs to you is really mine. You make your own decisions with your own goods.

Support Texts

“While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” (Acts 5:4, ESV)

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” (Ephesians 4:28, ESV)