

1 JOHN 1:9
THE
PROTESTANT
CONFESSIONAL

by
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ERROR RESTATED

A core belief, held as dogma by most conservative Christians, is that Christians who have unconfessed sins are in need of forgiveness, are out of fellowship with God, and are walking in darkness. They believe that a Christian is either in fellowship or out of fellowship based on his confession of sin. Volumes have been written and many sermons preached which promote the need for *keeping short accounts*—making sure you do not have any unconfessed and unforgiven sins. The underlying assumption is that God only forgives sins that are confessed.

This teaching has become so entrenched in the church as a whole that it is never questioned; and anyone who would dare do so would be immediately dismissed as having departed from orthodoxy. As with all *traditions of men*, dogma itself, not Scripture, becomes the test of orthodoxy. Error is perpetuated by the antiquity of a belief and by the sheer numbers who hold to it.

The young novice [believer] who questions this teaching is silenced with, “Who are you to question a doctrine so widely accepted? How could so many good, godly men be wrong?”

When the young student is not convinced, he is told that he will understand it when he gets more educated and spiritually mature. If he attempts to discuss the Scripture itself and actually succeeds in challenging his teachers, he is ridiculed or threatened with being labeled a *heretic*.

Old errors are venerated, as are old men who no longer have to go into battle to defend themselves. Truth doesn't need to be protected; it is its own best defense. Error must be policed and protected from open debate. In contrast, truth is upheld by careful examination of the Word of God. Truth is like a lion; you don't need to talk up its defense; just turn it loose.

Take note of those who protect their creeds from examination. Light never fears darkness, but darkness must avoid the light, *lest its deeds should be reprov'd*. The light shines in darkness, but the darkness will not bring its *sacred* dogma to the light. Error will dissipate, melt away, and be totally overcome by the shining of light. Darkness cannot impact light. Light dispels darkness. Love and truth cast out fear. He who fears light is hiding something. Beware of the cult mentality that restricts its adherents to one line of thought, afraid to allow independent investigation. Questions are the bane of unfounded dogma. The Word of God should remain open, and our doctrines should ever be held to its light.

To extract a truth from the Bible and then judge the interpretation of the Bible by that

tradition is the foundation of cultism. A teacher who must protect his students by other than open discussion and careful consideration of all the Word of God is demeaning his students, as well as showing lack of confidence in his own message.

METHOD

So, how does this author suppose that he came to truth where others have not? Through a sound and honest method of Bible study. God's truth is conveyed in the written Word. The Word is made up of words. If a student doesn't know the meaning of individual words, he will not know the meaning of the sentence. This study is based on a conviction that the Author of the Bible has defined the words of Scripture through repeated and consistent use. To accurately understand the meaning of any passage, one must first gather Biblical definitions of all terms involved.

The concordance allows us to find and read every time a word is used in the Bible. There are several key words or phrases pertinent to this subject. If you approach a passage assuming that you know the meaning of each word, you will end up where you started. Tradition has evolved unique definitions that may or may not be in accord with Biblical definitions. We will trace all the key words and phrases found in our passage.

- Fellowship
- Light, walk in the light, is in the light
- Darkness, are in darkness, walk in darkness
- Abide, abiding, abideth
- Lie
- Truth

- If we say
- Forgive

Only when we know how God uses these terms can we understand 1 John 1:3-10. Experience is of no value. Faith in the words of Scripture will take you places that unaided reason will never go. I have examined every usage, and you will want to do the same; but for the sake of brevity, where the references are too numerous, we will print only a fair representation. I will state the false concepts supposedly derived from each passage and then submit it to the scrutiny of Scripture.

FELLOWSHIP EXAMINED

(All 16 uses of the word *fellowship* are examined.)

Leviticus 6:2 - 7 - *“If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor, ... he shall restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part....”* The subject is *dishonest handling of tangible property* and the remuneration that should follow. In listing the circumstances under which fraud or theft may occur, one of them is *in fellowship*. That is, two people had common and equal claim to something, as in a partnership, and one was defrauded by the other, leading to the need to have the *principal* restored, plus 20%.

Shared ownership is called *fellowship*. Social communion is not an issue. Their fellowship was a PARTNERSHIP of property. This is quite different from the modern misconception of fellowship as always being *a state of communing*.

Psalms 94:20 - *“Shall the throne of iniquity*

have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Here we see a political power, called *the throne of iniquity*, which passes a law that is inherently wicked. It legalizes that which God condemns. The Psalmist, by means of a rhetorical question, points out that, although the *mischief* is supported by law, it does not invoke the authority of God. All law should reflect God's law, but in this case God is not party to it. He does not fellowship with this seat of power. It does not represent Him. So we see that *fellowship* is a union, not a communion.

Acts 2:42, 46 - *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common. ...And they, continued daily with one accord in the temple, and in breaking bread from house to house...."* Their fellowship was a sharing of carnal things. It is not a discussion of the quality or depth of their love for each other. The entire structure of the early church was a fellowship (common participation) in all aspects of life (work, home, possessions, and worship).

1 Corinthians 1:9 - *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."* The "carnal" Corinthian Christians were called unto the "fellowship" of Christ. All Bible students know that the "calling" is not a special offer extended to elite Christians. All who are called are justified (Romans 8:30). All Christians are *"the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). According to this passage, *fellowship* is defined as a participation in Christ. This fellowship is not entered by degrees. One is either in Christ, thus in fellowship, or one is not in Christ, thus not in fellowship. Their carnality, which led to their chastisement (in some

cases, death), never brought their fellowship into question. It is because they were already in fellowship that they were chastised for their sin!

1 Corinthians 10:16 - 21 - *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? ...for we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. ...are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ...and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils...ye cannot be partakes of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”* The passage is about having fellowship with either the Lord or the devil through eating from the table dedicated to one or the other. The one loaf expresses the unity and universality of the body of Christ. The communion of the blood of Christ is the saved state. It is not an *off and on again* experience based on confession of sin. All saints are part of the *one bread*. All partake of Christ through His shed blood. To eat bread that had been dedicated to devils was, in the mind of the eater, a participation in, fellowship with, devils.

It is interesting to note the fellowship that one shared through eating from the two different tables was viewed as identical in the manner that they produced communion with either God or devils. If eating bread dedicated to devils produced the same kind of fellowship as eating bread dedicated to the LORD, then we have learned something about the LORD’S table. Were the heathen eating the flesh of their idol? No, and there was no such claim made, yet they were partaking of the idol—the devil behind it.

Therefore we can conclude that when one eats from the LORD’S table, he does not have to be eating the flesh of Christ to be partaking of Christ. This would rule out both