

# The Grace of Fellowship

## Introduction

The recent social lockdown (a false measure to combat a false pandemic) has focused attention on the nature of the local church. All churches were closed by the government on false pretences. Many churches resorted to the use of social media and conference apps to conduct church meetings over the Internet – as if that were a satisfactory way of fellowshiping. I was very critical of this and continue to be so, but this provides an opportunity to explain the grace of fellowship.

## The grace of fellowship?

You won't find a verse where such a phrase is mentioned in the Bible; but that does not mean that it is not Biblical. After all, the word 'Trinity' is not found in the Bible but that is a very important doctrine.<sup>1</sup> God expects saints to investigate and deduce truths by study and submission. Through study we deduce that there is such a thing as the grace of fellowship.

### **What is grace?**

In pure doctrinal terms, God's grace is his sovereign, free favour and unmerited kindness to his elect saints. This is chiefly manifested in the gift of salvation, which results from divine grace. It is the expression of God's goodness to those he chooses.

We do not warrant grace. No man can do anything whatsoever to merit grace; grace is free and sovereign. It is only distributed to those God selects according to his good pleasure (Eph 1:5).

Grace only arises from the cross. Grace comes to men because Jesus died to justify them and make them favourable in God's eyes. Those whom Jesus died for receive grace (Jn 1:17). This means that there is no such thing as common grace to all men. No man can find favour with God apart from the blood of Christ. [Thus the grace of fellowship in church meetings cannot be enjoyed by sinners.]

But grace does not merely provide the benefits of salvation. Grace is continually given to believers throughout their lives: 'grace upon grace' (Jn 1:16).<sup>2</sup> The true church is a place where there is great grace upon all (Acts 4:33).

Grace is the strength that God gives, and the resources that God provides, to do his will (2 Cor 12:9). The whole Christian life is meant to be reliance upon grace and a refusal to act in the strength of the old nature.

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<sup>1</sup> We establish the doctrine of the Trinity by deduction. We can prove that there are three Persons in the Godhead by separately establishing their individual divinity from Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> 'Grace for grace' in KJV, NKJV, ASV, WEB. 'Grace upon grace' in NAS, NAB, RSV, NRSV, BBE, Darby. 'Grace over against grace' YLT. 'For' is *Anti* meaning over against, before, opposite to, instead of, in place of. The meaning here is that God gives grace, upon grace, upon grace – grace instead of grace. Grace now instead of past grace.

### **Fellowship is sharing grace**

When saints (who all individually receive grace) come together to share, they multiply the grace that they have by sharing it with others. The more you give grace to others, the more grace you receive. The church is a melting pot of grace.

Therefore, it is quite correct to talk about 'the grace of fellowship'. The church is a place where grace abounds and you are blessed simply by being in a place of grace.

Simply turning up in church being filled with grace blesses others and you are blessed by their grace. This is before you share any gift of grace that you have.

When we share gifts of grace then grace is even more magnified. Every saint has a gift from God and when this gift is shared then all profit from the grace you manifest. The purpose of fellowship is to grow by the sharing of grace one to another.

I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. Eph 3:7

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Eph 4:7

Do not neglect the gift that is in you. 1 Tim 4:14

Stir up the gift of God which is in you. 2 Tim 1:6

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pt 4:10

In church God's grace is centred in people. Saints are recipients of divine grace and they are meant to share that one with another for the profiting of the whole body. The local church is a melting pot of grace exhibited through one then another. The more grace that is shared, the more God is glorified because he is the giver of this grace.

There is grace in fellowship.

## **What is the church?**

I really shouldn't need to expound on this as I have given many expositions of this doctrine; however, for clarity I will make a brief mention.

### **What the church is not**

*The church is not a building*

This is so obvious that it needs no explanation – yet many foolish people still think of the church as bricks and mortar.

People even talk about going into an old church and feeling the Holy Spirit, and some such nonsense. Those buildings were designed by men to deliberately evoke such emotions, with their tall ceilings, marble floors, stained glass windows and echo-y sound distribution. Just as an old fashioned courtroom is designed to evoke nervousness and fear, so old churches were designed to make you feel small and in the presence of a higher force. All of this is human manipulation.

God does not dwell in temples, basilicas, cathedrals or old church buildings made of stone:

The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands. Act 7:48

[The] Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Acts 17:24

The Holy Spirit does not inhabit stone buildings, he dwells in the hearts of saints (Rm 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22, 3:3; Gal 4:6; Heb 4:12).

*The church is not a social club*

Though this is clearly why many modern people attend church, and though there are many social, community benefits from church life, the church is not a social club.

Social clubs are man-centred but the local church is God-centred. Far too many people revolve their life around a church, with its various meetings and social events, but the church was not designed for this, which is merely another form of entertainment.

*The church is not entertainment*

Though many would deny this, the reality is that all sorts of people go to church for entertainment.

The most obvious exempla is the entertainment of modern Charismatic churches. All of the spectacle is entertainment; from the rock bands, the light shows, the dancing, the emotional exaggeration, and the performances of the preachers. It is little different to a nightclub or a large rock concert. The performances of the raving preachers are even posted online as stand alone entertainment.

But at the opposite end of the scale there is the entertainment of conservative churches which are little different to preaching centres. People travel scores of miles to hear their favourite preacher every week and have little to do with other Christians in the churches, either on Sunday or anytime else. The focus of the church is the performance of the preacher and his style of homiletics.

Then, in various churches, it is the worship style which attracts people. The sermon and preacher are tolerated in a short section but the focus is upon an over-emotional, music led, hypnotic worship section. People go to these type of churches to be emotionally affected by the worship and little else.

In all these situations there is no real fellowship but only a stimulation of the emotions.

*It is not divided*

The church is not divided into a ruling clergy and a subservient laity. This was introduced in the Post Apostolic age by church fathers that imported old covenant forms into church life and gradually created authoritarian churches under a ruling hierarchy led by monarchical bishops. These metropolitan bishops then developed into the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, which was copied by the Anglicans and many other churches. Charismatic churches have a similar hierarchy but use different names for authorities (such as prophet, apostle).

All forms of clergy / laity split or pyramidal hierarchies are wrong. The church of God has no place for these.

Thus there are no parochial bishops, archbishops, cardinals, prelates, vicars, priests, deans, readers, popes, apostles (as archbishops), ruling prophets, moderators, ruling elders, senior pastors and such like.

Anything that divides the church is anathema.

### *It is not Old Covenant*

The church is the outcome and guardian of the New Covenant brought by Christ's ministry (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 9:15, 12:24).

The Old Covenant was a temporary institution to point the way to the coming Messiah (Gal 3:19, 4:2). Thus all the forms of the Old Covenant were shadows (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5, 10:1) pointing to aspects of Christ's work. All these, along with the Old Covenant, are abrogated (Heb 8:13) because the reality, the fulness, is in Christ. Any church celebrating Old Covenant forms are actually blaspheming because they are saying that the form is still in existence and the fulness in Christ is not valid.

All the following are cancelled and must not appear in the church:

- Animal sacrifices and offerings. [Pointed to aspects of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.]
- Festivals, feast days, fast days. [Pointed to aspects of Christ's life and work.]
- Temples, Tabernacles, sacred buildings. [Symbolised the dwelling of God with man.]
- Utensils and sacred objects (Ark, table, altar etc). [Types of aspects of Christ's life and work.]
- Incense. [Symbolised the virtues of Christ.]
- Anointing oil. [Symbolised the fulness of the Spirit upon Christ.]
- Priests. [Pointed to the High Priestly work of Christ.]
- Prophets. [A type of Christ as the true Prophet speaking for God,]
- Vestments. [The garments of glory and beauty pointed to the virtues and graces of Christ's life.]
- Ablutions. [Symbolised coming to God by cleansing of the flesh.]
- Instrumental music. [Symbolised the harmony of praise by the saints to God.]
- Choirs. [Symbolised the sacrifice of praise of the saints.]
- Dancing. [Symbolised the joy of communion with God and his grace.]

### **What the church is**

#### *A people called out*

'Church' is the translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a body of people called out from society. It was used secularly of the significant people in the Greek city-states called together to discuss state and political matters and make decisions; in short, a gathering of citizens.

Thus it means the people of God called out and elect to represent God on Earth. This is the principle title of God's people in the NT; it occurs about 80 times.

The word *ekklesia* covers the universal aspect of the church (that is all the elect from all ages) as well as the local church. Thus we could note the following aspects:

- The universal church (all the elect).
- The OT church (Acts 7:38; 'congregation' is *ekklesia*).
- The church of currently dead saints living in heaven awaiting the Parousia.
- All the elect people in the world alive today (the 'militant church').
- The local church.

*An assembly*

'Assembly' is the translation of the word *sunagoge* (synagogue) meaning: 1) a bringing together, gathering; 2) in the NT, an assembling together of men; 3) a synagogue as an assembly of Jews. This is used in James 2:2; sometimes in Acts *ekklesia* is translated as 'assembly'. For our purposes the word means a bringing together of people.

*A coming together*

*Sunerchomai* means to assemble, to gather together. It is used in 1 Cor 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34, 14:23, 26.

*The people of God*

Heb 4:9, 11:25; 1 Pt 2:10.

Since the *ekklesia* is the people of God, then it is clear that the local church is only for believers. Unbelievers may come in as visitors brought by someone (1 Cor 14:24) but the church meeting is not for them, except as a by-product they may hear the Gospel. It is for believers to come together to benefit from mutual edification. Sinners cannot bring any grace gifts to the church.

The modern idea of making a church more palatable and inviting to unbelievers is a mistake of the first order. It is anathema.

*God's own special people*

Titus 2:14; 1 Pt 2:9.

*A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*

1 Pt 2:9.

*The house of God*

The house [*oikos*] of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15

*The household of God*

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household [*oikeos*] of God. Eph 2:19

*A mystery*

The fellowship of the mystery. Eph 3:9

His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. Col 1:24-26

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. Rev 1:20

God is a mystery (Col 2:2); Christ is a mystery (Rm 16:25; Eph 3:4; Col 4:3; 1 Tim 3:16); the Gospel is a mystery (1 Cor 2:7; Eph 6:19); the purpose of God is a mystery (1 Cor 15:51; Eph 1:9, 3:3; 1 Tim 3:9; Rev 10:7); the union of Christ with the church is a mystery (Eph 5:32; Col 1:27). Believers meeting together share understanding of these mysteries and explain them. Sinners have no knowledge or understanding of these mysteries.

Truly, the meeting of the church is a stewardship of the mysteries.

*Interim conclusion*

Therefore we can assert that the church is a called out people, the people of God.

Note the following words that are not used of the church in the NT:

- Congregation.
- A church service.
- Sanctuary. [Mentions of this are either applied to the Tabernacle (Heb 9:1, 2, 13:11) or the heavenly session of Christ (Heb 8:2).]
- Tabernacle.
- Chapel (does not appear in the NT).
- Fellowship, as in 'The (such and such) Fellowship'. Fellowship is never used as a title of the church but it is a description of what the church does.

**What the church does**

Apart from various servile duties (making tea, handing out hymn books, stewarding etc.) on Sundays the fact is that most people going to modern churches do nothing, except join in corporate singing and occasional prayers. The bulk of action in the normal church 'service' is performed by the minister, leader or pastor. Perhaps small duties are passed to a subordinate (such as reading notices).

This is why unbelievers can attend churches and not be distinct from believers.

This is anathema.

It is the very opposite of what church is supposed to be.

*General principles*

Let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.  
Rom 14:19

Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification. Rm 15:2

There are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. 1 Cor 12:6-7

That the church may receive edification. 1 Cor 14:6

Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. 1 Cor 13:12

Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 1 Cor 14:26

The whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Eph 4:16

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

The general principle of coming together is mutual edification. We come together, not to worship (but we should be continual worshippers),<sup>3</sup> not for entertainment, not for an emotional experience, not for mysticism but to edify and encourage one another.

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<sup>3</sup> Heb 13:15, 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name'.

Paul's directions include many aspects of edification:

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke [*dialegomai*, dialogue, discuss, argue] to them and continued his message [*logos*, speech] until midnight. Acts 20:7

That I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Rm 1:12

Receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Rm 15:7

Admonish one another. Rm 15:13

Greet one another with a holy kiss. Rm 16:16

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit. 1 Cor 12:8

Care for one another. 1 Cor 12:25

For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. 1 Cor 14:31

Through love serve one another. Gal 5:13

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Eph 4:29

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 5:18-20

Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Eph 5:21

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Col 3:16

Abound in love to one another. 1 Thess 3:12

Comfort each other and edify one another. 1 Thess 5:11

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. 1 Tim 2:1

Teach and exhort these things. 1 Tim 6:2

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Tim 4:2

That he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. Titus 1:9

Exhort the young men to be sober-minded. Titus 2:6

Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Titus 2:15

Exhort one another daily. Heb 3:13

Consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Heb 10:24

Exhorting one another. Heb 10:25

So actions include:

- Receive and welcome one another in love.
- Serve one another in love.
- Submit to one another (therefore no authoritarianism).
- Love one another.

- Start a song of praise to God.
- Speak to one another in songs.
- Giving thanks.
- Giving edification.
- Giving an inspired exhortation.
- Give a general exhortation.
- Discuss matters with one another. Ask questions.
- Giving inspired counsel.
- Giving instruction in sound doctrine (e.g. theological training).
- Teaching in general (e.g. Biblical exposition).
- Admonishing.
- Rebuking sin.
- Encouraging one another.
- Supplications, prayers, intercessions.

### *Breaking bread*

As well as edifying one another, we celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday when we come together.

**Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. Acts 20:7**

**Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor 11:20**  
 [Spoken in criticism that the Supper was being damaged by selfishness. The real purpose of gathering was to eat the Lord's Supper.]

Originally this was part of a larger communal meal:

**When you come together to eat. 1 Cor 11:33** [See context; this is speaking of an *agape* meal: a sharing of food between all before celebrating the Supper. The *agape* must not be confused or mixed with the Supper.]

The Lord's Supper is chiefly a means of edification of the saints to continually offer a memorial of thanks to God for the cross:

**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**  
 1 Cor 11:26

It is also a focus upon the hope of Christ's return in glory:

**Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Heb 9:28**

Saints eagerly wait for Christ's return and this is remembered in the Supper.

### *How big the local church is*

The local church is necessarily small. No number is given but a church is compared to a flock and a flock is generally thirty or less.<sup>4</sup> This number allows a small team of unpaid, working elders to be able to lead and counsel effectively without stress.

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<sup>4</sup> In Israel the size of a flock varied greatly with some rich men having very large flocks of sheep and herds of goats. However, most sheep farmers also had other interests (goats, vines, cattle, figs, produce etc.) and

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Lk 12:32

When He had called His twelve disciples to Him. Matt 10:1 [Jesus considered that 12 disciples were sufficient for a trainer.]

Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. Acts 20:7-8 [The church in Troas could fit into a single upper room.]

Since churches are to meet in houses, it stands to reason that the size of the room determines the size of the church. However, when a church becomes too big for a few elders to pastor properly, then it is time to subdivide and form a new church and release equipped men into eldership ministry.

### *Where the local church meets*

It only ever meets in homes. There is no dedicated building ever to be used. This is necessary to keep numbers small and to ensure the right atmosphere for general informal edification and dialogue.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house. Acts 8:3

Greet the church that is in their house. Rm 16:5

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 1 Cor 16:19

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Col 4:15

To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow labourer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Phm 1:1-2

Churches only occupied large secular buildings with the accession of Constantine [c.274–337] who joined the church to the state and brought in a number of worldly practices. It was then that churches occupied basilicas, which were large oblong buildings, often with double colonnades and a semicircular apse,<sup>5</sup> used in ancient Rome as a law court or for public assemblies. Medieval church designs were based on the Roman basilicas.

### **Leadership**

Leadership is only by a team of equal elders. There is no ruling elder, no senior minister and no other type of leader. There is, therefore, no hierarchy.

In the NT the terms 'bishop' and 'elder' are used synonymously. The Greeks preferred the word 'bishop' (overseer) while the Jews preferred the term 'elder'. Other words (leader, pastor, rulers etc.) refer to elders. They simply describe the work of an elder (pastor = shepherd; leader = guide, guardian, or the one going before).

Deacons are to support the elders by doing the practical work of an administrator, such as dealing with money. They have no spiritual authority.

would have fairly small flocks that a single shepherd could well look after. The young David could not have looked after a flock of thousands on his own in the wilderness.

<sup>5</sup> A large semicircular or polygonal recess in a church, arched or with a domed roof and typically at the church's eastern end.

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. ... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, [*episkopos*, bishop] to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:17, 28

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Phil 1:1

Let the elders who rule [*proistemi* – to be a protector, guardian, to give aid, to superintend] well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Tim 5:17

Appoint elders in every city as I commanded you. Titus 1:5

Remember those who rule [*hegeomai*, to go before, lead] over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow. Heb 13:7

Leaders do not dominate the church like the world's leaders.

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Pt 5:2-3

You younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders [i.e. older people]. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'. 1 Pt 5:5

In fact leaders are gentle, like a nursing mother.

We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. 1 Thess 2:7

Regarding Charismatic aberrations: the formal office of prophet has ended. It ceased with John the Baptist (Matt 11:13). Leadership by prophets is old covenant and thus cancelled.

The office of apostle is a missionary sent out by a home church to plant a new one. He has no authority whatsoever as an apostle in his home church, he reverts to what he was before being sent out (this is the meaning of 'apostle'). Charismatic apostles ruling over multiple churches and thousands of people is a serious error and is more akin to an Anglican archbishop.

## Koinonia

Having established that the church is all about people and edification, we need to look further at what fellowship is.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42

If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. 1 Jn 1:7

Fellowship is the word we normally use to translate the Greek word *koinonia*. This is an important word that means much more than merely meeting together. It is better described as 'communion' or 'intimacy'. The practical basis of this communion is to give a share and to take a share. It is mutual edification.

But this communion is more than the technicality of sharing. It is about reflecting the communion within the Godhead. The church on Earth is meant to be a manifestation, an

illustration, of the way that God exists. The church must be a reflection of the loving communion that dominates the Trinity. This is why the church must operate in the way that the apostles demand. Anything less is a distortion of the illustration of the loving communion within God. This is why the modern churches, of all types, distort and blaspheme the name of God because they do not reflect the loving communion of the Godhead in material terms. They fail in their testimony. They are a poor witness to divine grace.

In fact, with their clergy / laity split, modern churches better illustrate the heresies about God that abounded in the first four centuries after the apostles died. Thus churches with authoritarian leaders and a docile laity better reflect Modal Monarchianism or Sabellianism.

This is passive blasphemy and almost none of the churches understand this.

It is a serious issue to model the church on earthly terms (in fact demonic terms, all pyramidal authority stems from the satanic pattern of dominion). The world operates in an authoritarian fashion but the church is the opposite of authoritarianism.

The local church must operate on the basis of koinonia – communion, intimate fellowship. This means that the apostolic teaching on how do act in church must be obeyed.

### **Manifestations of this divine communion in the local church**

I will simply list some items with little comment.

- Equality of all. [As the Persons of the Godhead are equal, so all members of the body of Christ are equal. There is no preferential authority of anyone over others. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.]
- Unconditional love towards all.
- Interdependency.
- Mutual edification.
- A focus on the glorification of Jesus Christ as Lord.
- Self-existence. [In God this is aseity; absolute underived self-existence; life. In the church this is reflected in the church's sanctification (separation) from the world, being utterly different from the world, and being independent in existence.]
- Spirituality. [All aspects of the church's life must be spiritual and not based on worldly ideas or human pragmatism.]
- Holiness.
- Wisdom.
- Righteousness.
- Goodness.
- Faithfulness.
- Grace.
- Justice.
- Patience.
- Unity.
- Truth.

In short, the attributes of God must be manifested in the church, albeit in a diminished manner. Each one of these items merits a full analysis as to how it operates in the church of God and how it expresses a divine characteristic.

## The lockdown

All this brings us to the lockdown.

To cope with sinful government demands, almost all churches bowed the knee to men and feared human authority above fearing God, and thus changed the nature of the church completely.

They did this by ignoring the grace of fellowship and believed that churches could continue to operate by using the Internet's various conference platforms, such as Zoom. The fact that anyone thought that this was acceptable proves that they don't know what the grace of fellowship is, or why it is so important.

One of the reasons they thought this was acceptable is because the church has become a form of entertainment rather than a communion of saints. The focus has been on the preacher for centuries instead of the body. As a result, the church can issue a video or a Zoom chat centred on the preacher and churchgoers think that this is the new normal. This is not koinonia. It is a parody at best and blasphemy at worst.

### **What should the churches have done?**

Without a shadow of doubt, the churches should have ignored the bad demands of a wicked government and continued to meet as normal. If the church bows the knee to this, how far will it capitulate in the real persecution that is coming down the tracks?

I repeat, all churches should have continued to meet as normal. Do you think that the government can lock up millions of law-abiding people with no repercussions? The government would have backed down. In fact I know of a few churches that did meet as normal and nothing happened to them. Can you imagine a policeman stopping a church service and arresting the vicar? Could you imagine the backlash if the government arrested thousands of old ladies for going to church. No such government would survive.

Despite this power that the churches had, they all backed down in utter disgrace.

Throughout history there have been attempts to silence the church and stop it meeting, even in Britain. Perhaps the worst was the killing times in Scotland when British troops were arresting and killing Presbyterians forced to meet in woods and caves. Despite this, men, women and children willingly suffered a cruel fate and refused to stop meeting. They gave their lives to keep meeting together.

What happened to the backbone of modern Christians? Modern church leaders have weaker spines than children in the 1600s (and many know significantly less).<sup>6</sup>

When a further lockdown comes as it surely will, and as Bill Gates has said it will, I urge churches with any sense at all to refuse to give in to satanic demands to curtail meetings.

However, what I truly urge Christians to do is get out of the whole corrupt church system. Start meeting underground in homes right away and do church properly. When further persecution comes, you will be better able to deal with it and to help one another survive it.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* was written for children but many leaders I have met struggle to understand it.

## Conclusion

Some may think I am being harsh in condemning thousands of churches for capitulation to wickedness. But contemporaries thought that Jeremiah was harsh, that Isaiah was too strong, that Amos was too severe, that Ezekiel was too mysterious, that Moses was too single-minded. I care nothing about what people think of me, I only care about what God thinks.

The point is, am I right or wrong? Should churches have obeyed the government and shut down churches (they are still closed, even though shops, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, cafés, banks, and supermarkets are all open)? Or should they have resisted an evil law and continued to meet as normal? No one can be in any doubt; churches should have continued to operate:

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Heb 10:24-25

Note that fellowship is more important as the Day approaches. Surely we are closer to this Day than ever before and meeting is thus more important as the world plunges into open Satanism daily.

The fact that churches are still shut for no reason,<sup>7</sup> when almost everything else is open, proves that there is a hidden agenda here that is opposed to Christianity. People can mix in a pub, a café and a restaurant but cannot fellowship in church (even if it practised social distancing). Why? Because the draconian measures target Christians specifically as well as creating fear and submission in the masses.

When will Christians start understanding what spiritual warfare really is? It is not chasing imaginary demons out of sinful believers (who need to repent and stop sinning and not be exorcised) or out of a town; it is learning obedient resistance in your private life and it is standing for truth in social life. The Gospel in manifestation will always attract enemy action and this must be resisted. The word of God must be proclaimed and any attempt to stop it must be ignored. Only death should silence us.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version  
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<sup>7</sup> Viruses are spread just as much in conversations, jokes and laughter in pubs as in singing a hymn.