

Continuing Steadfastly

By Paris Reidhead*

I am going to read this evening from Acts, the 2nd Chapter. I am reading, beginning with Acts, Chapter 2 and vs 37:

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Act. 2:37-47).

If we want to find out what we ought to be individually and corporately, it behooves us to go back to the early church; there to see it in its beginnings is to see and focus the principles that were to underlay this new thing of God, the church of Jesus Christ. You’ll notice that we began at the conclusion of Peter’s ministry, and you will also notice that the people themselves gave their own invitation. Whatever Peter said in this previous portion is clearly before us, and you can read it, but you know from their response what he did not say. He did not in his sermon tell them how to be saved, nor did he in a sense tell them the effect of it. He waited until they had been moved by the truth, pierced by the Word. Then he explained to them what they must do. Repent, said he.

Now we spent the morning hour speaking of repentance in one of its aspects, and this congregation has heard a great deal over this pulpit regarding this important theme. Repent. Change of Lordship. Change of sovereignty. Change of purpose. Change of action. It is the preparation for faith, for heart faith that can savingly embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. In this, that is in this context, when He says repent, there is by implication that which he has stated before that now becomes the means of salvation. Whereas they did not know what they should do. The moment that he says, Repent, this communicates to their minds and hearts what’s expected of them. Jesus Christ has been exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Savior, To repent means to change their attitude about Christ, And of course to change their attitude about themselves. To believe on Him is to receive Him.

I read a very interesting work today regarding the word, love. It is in its ancient form from the Anglo-Saxon root, *lief*, in accordance with, in the same manner that, similarly to, and so on, to share the confidence that one is all that he says he is. To believe and to be loved are the same root, the same Anglo-Saxon idea. To love is to believe; to believe is to love. And thus, to have Jesus Christ for whose death they cried, Crucify Him. Now to believe is to be loved by them. And so repentance and faith are joined here by implication.

But you will notice that this is but the preparation for something further. Manifest your repentance, and manifest your faith, said He, “by being baptized.” There are areas in the world where, to be baptized, is the same as signing your death warrant. This is true in Mohammedan countries. There are supposedly many secret believers. Personally, I question whether one truly loves Christ until he is prepared to die for Christ, but this is a question which we could not settle here. But let it be understood that here it doesn’t cost much to be baptized. There is no one going to seek to poison you, or put a dagger in your back, or otherwise kill you as is the case in Egypt, for instance, and Sudan, and Pakistan, and other parts of the Mohammedan world. And so baptism meant to these who heard him a complete break with the past, and it was obvious that the salvation of which he spoke was not the product of the baptism, but produced this willingness to expose themselves to death, by following the Lord into the water of baptism.

But there again, this was a step, not an end. “Repent,” believe as we elsewhere find it, “be baptized.” But notice what he said right here at this point, as he is dealing with these that are obviously at this juncture at least inquiring as to what they should do in regard to Christ. Here he has a deeper life message, if you please, at the very threshold of the Christian life. Isn’t it strange? Or is what we customarily do strange? Frankly, I would be inclined to think that the Scripture is right and we are wrong, and that perhaps we had been just a little bit in error in implying that there was to be a gap in time between this that is set forth as salvation, and what we customarily call sanctification. Obviously there is a gap in time, because there is a sequence of events. But there was not expected to be years in between.

Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus, and two or three days later into his home came Ananias. “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me that I might pray for you, lay my hands upon you and pray for you that you receive your sight, and that you be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Act. 9:17). There was not expected to be a great gap of months, and years, between being forgiven and being filled with the Spirit. Notice, “Repent, be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ unto remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Here again it is made clear that the end of repentance is fellowship with God. Not simply a home in Heaven. That is certainly clearly taught throughout the Word, but not mentioned here. Fellowship with God.

This morning, as we considered Isaiah 40, “All flesh is as grass,” I had not seen it previously, but in meditation on the text this afternoon, it occurred to me that apart from the presence of God, apart from the fullness of the Holy Ghost, apart from the indwelling Christ, it is true that our flesh is just grass. It is interesting to note that in America agronomy or agriculture, a great deal of emphasis is being placed upon grasses. In fact, there is now a whole field of study on grasses. It was not there a few years ago. Because it has been shown that prime beef can be produced by just the proper kind of grass. Give the soil what it needs so that the grass contains what it ought. Give the cattle all the grass they want, and very little supplement beside, and the finest beef can be produced just from grass. And so this is a scientific statement: “All flesh is as grass” (Isa. 40:6).

But it is something else, that if the flesh can by the process of digestion and ingestion be transmuted into the flesh of cattle, shall we say, and we partake of it, we are not able to digest the nitrocellulose in the grass of the field. There are certain vegetables that we can profit from, but just grass as such we cannot. But the product of grass becomes the mainstay of our diet, and we are nourished and strengthened by that which has been grass. So in a sense it is proper to say, “All flesh is as grass,” in more aspects than one.

But think of it in this sense. Here Peter is speaking to these people, saying, God made you for Himself. He wants to fill you with Himself. You have been made to be a vessel for the fullness of God. You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. “The promise is to you and to your children, to them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” It is the presence of God. It is the fullness of God. It is the glorious indwelling Holy Spirit, that takes that which is in its essence nothing but grass and transmutes it into the noblest, highest service in the universe, to be the vehicle for the revelation of the glory of God.

And so we could then properly say that, for us not to know the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and not to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit is to voluntarily consign ourselves to being nothing really more than grass. And Peter is greatly concerned about this. “Repent,” the first step; and believe by inference; “be baptized” as testimony; “and the promise is to you and your children and to all the Lord shall call.” And this reaches down across the centuries to you, and to me tonight: That God’s goal in grace is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Now we have every reason to believe that this is exactly what happened. No reason to suppose that these people did not repent, that they did not believe savingly. No reason to think that they were not baptized. It explicitly says they were, and there is no reason for us to think that they were not filled with the Holy Ghost. I believe they were that very day.

You would think that this was the end, wouldn’t you? You would think that this was the time when it was all over. But actually from the Word of God this was just the beginning, because everything in the Church, everything that the Word of God has to say concerning the church, every office in the church, every ministry in the church, every gift to the church, everything that the Head of the church does in this wonderful new thing called His Body, the Church, presupposes that the members of it are going to be filled with the Spirit. This is the basic prerequisite for meaningful, spiritual participation in church life, the fullness of the

Holy Spirit. Now for one to have been forgiven and been pardoned, and to have stopped short of knowing the fullness of the Spirit of God, is in a sense to disqualify himself from meaningful participation in the church.

Actually, when this took place, this particular day, with all of these several things transpiring, they were qualified to begin participating in the life of the church. But even so, they were not mature in that sense that we understand through later testimony of Paul and others' maturity to be. They were babes, but they were forgiven babes, pardoned babes. They had understood the Cross at least in some beginning; aspect, for it separated them from their families and friends, as they were baptized. And they knew the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Notice in vs 41. "Then they that gladly received His Word were baptized. And the same day, (all this is transpiring within the 24 hour period.) There were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Well we would think, perhaps, in adjusting this to our day and generation that it should have taken 6 months at least, or a year. Instead of that it took just one day. But, I said they were babes. They were born-again babes. They were Spirit-filled babes. You see, being filled with the Spirit is not the, as Wesley¹ so wisely and well said in his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection", that sanctification of which I speak is not to be equated with spiritual maturity. It is simply the spiritual preparation to become mature. There is a great deal of difference, you see. And here they were then.

What did they do? What was necessary if this company now 3,500, or 3,120 as you may wish to calculate — what happened to turn this heterogeneous company, Rabbis, people from different areas and parts of the world, they were from all over; what took place? that enables God to get out of this company of people something that would be truly for His glory? I do not believe that you comprehend the blessing of God upon His church unless you understand vs 42, and I do not believe that you can expect, or I can expect to become the kind of mature Christians the Word of God holds out as normal for us unless we enter into the meaning of vs 42.

"And they (this whole company, 3 thousand we would properly infer) continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine." They had great respect for authority and teaching. It was not anarchy. It was not theological anarchy where everyone did as seemed right in his own eyes and taught as he wished. There was an authority of truth. There had been a company of people that had been with Christ for three years, to whom He had committed a body of truth.

I become greatly distressed when I find Christians that have had a wonderful experience with God that seemingly have no regard for the truth, the faith, that has been committed to the saints. When I find someone that says, Well I have an experience with God that makes it unnecessary for me to know what the church has held, believed and taught, I do not deny that they have had an experience. But I just question the source of the experience. For when the Spirit of God gives us an experience of Himself, He invariably gives us an appreciation for the faith once delivered to the saints: And a desire to know what has been taught. Oh, it may be that there are certain items of truth with which upon serious study and reflection we cannot agree. Even though you may not agree with Strong's theology, it would do you a world of good to read it, and to read it all, and to read it well. You may not agree with Charles Finney², Systematic Theology. You would be greatly profited to read it, to know what the faith has taught. You may not agree with Schaff or with Hodge but as a Christian that desires to have a strong structure upon which your life rests, you ought to be acquainted with what the church has believed. If you find it difficult to read Strong's or Schaff or Hodge by all means get Evans' book on theology, or get "What the Bible Teaches", by Reuben Torrey³. But somewhere, somehow you ought to have exposed your heart to the structure of truth that been held by the church. You ought to know that as a Christian that is desirous to becoming "more than a child tossed to and fro with every wind and whim of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). I think it is important. I am confident that if, in the course of years, we as Pastors were to identify the messages that we bring with a system of doctrine, you would find that over several years preaching we have dealt with the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Father, the doctrine of man and of sin, of regeneration, of eschatology. We do not label it as doctrine and identify it as such, but what we preach is

1 John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement. The author of "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection".

2 Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

3 Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928) An American evangelist, pastor, educator and writer

sound doctrine. And this is true of Pastors that love the Word everywhere. But sometimes it is good to become acquainted with a structure, a system. Not that you become enslaved to it, in bondage to it.

I am rather amused by my friends that are avidly and vociferously Calvinist, or, and/or as the case may be, Arminian because almost invariably I find out that they do not know what Calvin taught, and they do not know what; good taught. They just know what words they are supposed to get mad at, you see. They have been conditioned to a reaction, rather than instructed in the truth. And it ought to so lay hold upon you that, with no further exhortation than I have had, you get in touch with the book store by calling them or writing them and saying, I want one of these books on doctrine that the Pastor talked about. I would like to read it. It isn't easy reading, believe me. But all of us have the embryo of a brain, and if we work at it and nourish it, it might develop into a useful, functioning structure of truth. So let's nourish it and see what will come if do.

So, let's arm ourselves. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine." They wanted to understand the truth in its perspective. Now I do not believe it was systematic in the sense of Strong's. If some of you would infer from what I am saying that these people enrolled in a course, in an evening Bible School, and studied Strong's theology, you press a little past what I meant to imply. But you see, these men who have labored long and hard have sought to bring the contribution of the ages to bear upon that which I am sure in its simplest form, and its clearest form, unmixed by heresy, the Apostles communicated. And they were interested.

Do any of you have a hobby? I am sure many of you have had, or currently do have. Have you ever discovered that when you begin a new hobby how easy it is to spend time reading about it, studying it? You have to learn a whole new nomenclature. There is a whole new system of terms. Again another thing that I think is wrong is that we can expect people to become Christians and yet try and speak in the parlance of the street and as though there were no nomenclature to learn. You cannot even learn photography or bird watching, or trees, without learning a nomenclature, a system of terms. And I do not think that it is asking too much of those who would go on in the things of Christ to learn appropriate terms to express truth. And I am not in any wise going to reduce the parlance of the faith down to the baby talk of the street in order to accommodate those who are intellectually too lazy to learn the nomenclature when if they took up photography they would have to do it and would not find it difficult to do.

"They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine." This was important. They were coming from backgrounds of Judaism for the most part, this time at least. These were all Judaic converts. And they had to learn new terms. They had to learn new expressions. They had to have new concepts communicated to them, and so they gave themselves to it. They realized its importance. And I would make bold to say that the degree of the effectiveness of your witness to Christ is measured in part by how much you understand of the structure of truth that is communicated in the Word. Now it is not communicated in a systematic form, but it is systematically communicated throughout the Word. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine."

But I want you to see this next word. It is the one that has gripped my heart, and upon which I dwelt at length with the young people yesterday morning and afternoon. And "they continued stedfastly in fellowship." I have purposed, because of the grip this has upon me to look, trace down, every occurrence in the New Testament of the use of this word in any of its forms, Koinonia, and I further purpose to trace it down in every occurrence in the Septuagint, as it was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Koinonia, common. This book was written in what we call the Koina Greek, the common Greek, the Greek of the streets, and the Greek of the people. It wasn't the high, literary type of language, but that which was commonly used to communicate the thoughts and affairs of men. This is the basic idea of koinonia. Common.

But the word, Common, is used in another aspect, share. Two people in the pew, one hymn book. It is a common hymnbook, not that it is base. Oh, it may be. We are waiting for new ones. The cover may be off, and it may be torn, but this is not what we have reference to. We are talking about the fact that it is shared. You use it, and she uses it. And you are singing from a book that you jointly use. It is saying the same thing to both of you. You are sharing it. You are participating in the singing, you are participating in the reading, and you are sharing the actual book from which it has come. Now, do you have a Bible in your hand? What does the cover of it say? It says Holy Bible. So does mine. How many books does it have? 66. 44 authors, writers. We have one Book, and it testifies to us of a Holy God, who had a Holy Son, Jesus; and this Book has been given to us by the Holy Spirit; and it tells us the same thing. You may have another version, another translation which you prefer. But it says essentially the same thing. Perhaps your version may be even more exact than the one that I choose to read from here.

Nevertheless as we go back to the same source, to the text, and we are sharing one revelation. So it begins there, and it tells us of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so our faith has to do with Him, the Triune God. And we find also that it tells us about ourselves, what it says about you it says about me. And then it tells me that you are no different. We were made of the same stuff, with the same kind of nature, the same kind of problems, the same temptations; the temptations which you face are the temptations which I face. We are in the same condemnation, common condemnation. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We are under the same sentence, eternal separation from God, because of our sins. We were in the same helplessness. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, not a thing can we do to add merit or to aid worthiness, or in any wise to secure our salvation. We are closed up to the same impassable area. Our guilt. Until we see this wall of guilt breached by the Lord Jesus Christ is made to be sin for us. He was made to be what you were and what I am by nature, in order that we might become what He is. He would die, the just for the unjust, so we share the same Savior. The door is the same door, repentance and faith.

How capricious God would be if He said to the people in China, for instance, Oh, no. You do not have to repent and believe. All you have to do is — and they make some over simplification. This would not be right. This would not be fair. There has to be one door, one means of appropriating grace, the same for all, all men, all men everywhere. And so we have a common threshold, a common door into life, to repent of our sins and savingly receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as sovereign to reign, as well as Savior by whose shed blood we are forgiven.

Well now you would think, wouldn't you, that when we come this far that it would not be difficult to go on together. But you see, it is just so strange that about the time that we are both forgiven, you are forgiven and I am forgiven, that we begin to resort to distinguishing characteristics, the things that cause us to differ. Sometimes it is color, sometimes it is race, sometimes it is social standing, and sometimes it is financial status, educational degrees, and many different things that come in now at this point when we have come in through the door. And this church moves out to the far side of town, and builds an enormous structure you know, a beautiful mausoleum and memorial of a dead faith. And there it has been, an elaborate, and enormous structure that has come, because well you see though they were sinners, and they needed a Savior's dying love, and they were forgiven by His shed blood. When they were forgiven, when they were pardoned, immediately certain differences prevailed. They were educated, and those on the other side of the tracks weren't. And they were rich, and those on the other side of the track weren't. Do you know that that is the reason why this church is here? Do you know that? Just the very thing I am talking about.

Albert Benjamin Simpson⁴, well-educated and trained, able to serve in the churches on either side of the tracks for that matter, and Pastor of a very affluent, well to do church, then, down on 13th Street, right adjoining Evangeline Home actually. The church building is still standing, used — It is used by the people on - the Presbyterians on Sunday. It is used by a Rabbi's congregation as a Synagogue on Saturday. Down there on 13th Street. It is not difficult to find. Now Dr. Simpson had met some men that changed his life. He met George Pentecost, and Major Whittle, the son-in-law of D. L. Moody⁵. He met R. A. Torrey. He met D. L. Moody. Andrew Murray⁶ and F. B. Meyer⁷ were known to him. Something happened. There was a whole climate of reality that came into his heart, and he was not prepared to be just a professional clergyman, serving an affluent congregation. And it was an affluent position he held here. You realize they paid him \$5,000 in 1882 when he came. Do you know what that would equal today if it were possible to pay it? You'd have to have it right at \$30,000 when you consider income tax, cost-buying power, and so on. Something like that, I believe. And Dr. Simpson became burdened about the foreigners coming in, all of these poor people that had come from countries dominated by Catholicism, unsaved. They were in those days Irish, coming in from Dublin. They were Italians, coming in from Rome. They were Germans coming in from the Catholic portions of Germany. This was the wave of immigration. And they settled in the low income housing, and they were not being reached properly. So he would have street meetings with these poor immigrant people, go out, on the street, start little Sunday Schools in stores that were for rent, begin witnessing and they were saved. They came to know the Lord Jesus.

4 Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

5 Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

6 Andrew Murray (1828-1917) He has authored over 240 Books

7 Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929) A Baptist Pastor

And then, he would say, "Well, you come down. I am preaching Sunday morning at the 13th St. Presbyterian Church." And they came in. They weren't as careful about garlic in their food as some of the other members were. Some of their diet was a little offensive to the people whose carriages brought them with four horses. And some of the elders went to him and said, Now we are all in favor of your preaching. We think that is good. And we are all in favor. But wouldn't you just let us build a church over there on the West Side to accommodate these people that just really aren't too happy here with us. And Dr. Simpson thought it over, and after a little while he said, without any feeling, or animosity or bitterness, I feel that my place is with them.

Do you know why this church is on 8th Ave? Did you realize that at one time he had a very fine church over on 42 St and 5th Ave.? But 5th Ave was just a little too far for his friends from 10th Ave. to come. There is a great gulf fixed, you know, that no man can pass. And so he didn't like that and sold that property and came over here. Of course, his friends thought he had lost his mind. They said, Listen. You are making a terrible mistake, moving clear out there in the suburbs to 44th St. Don't you know New York will never grow out that far? Well they were mistaken about a good many things.

But it has not all changed. A woman from up in Westchester County had called and made an appointment, and she told one of her friends where she was going. And she said, "I am going down to the Gospel Tabernacle Church to see Pastor Reidhead and..." "Oh," she said, "8th Avenue. I never thought of going there for help." It is just so far you know from where she would have customarily gone. If it had been on Park Avenue, she would have expected help. But 8th avenue. No good thing could come from 8th avenue. Consequently, we discover that these barriers have not been erased as time has gone on. It was not something peculiar to Dr. Simpson's day. It is something that prevails today. And it is something that I believe grieves the Spirit of God and grieves Him greatly: Namely; a failure to recognize that when we come into Jesus Christ and are supernaturally put in Him by the Holy Ghost all other delineations of race, of color, or social standing, of educational achievement, and accomplishment, all other delineating marks have lost their significance. Now, obviously we must recognize that there are such factors as ability to comprehend. But ability to comprehend spiritual truth has never been restricted to any particular educational level. We realize this. We do realize further that certain advantages in education are to be greatly coveted because they afford one a far wider area in which they can range for truth to nourish their heart, much better equipment, and it would be mean of me if I were not to recognize this. But the thing that presses upon my heart tonight is this, that there must be a sharing, not only up to the place of life, but the life beyond the threshold, if we are to know the blessing of God.

A case in point. Last week it was my privilege to be at King's College for their Fall Meetings. I spoke Monday morning and had liberty and freedom, and a respectful student body, and felt that there was contact made with them. I spoke Monday evening. But Tuesday evening a wonderful thing happened that has never happened before in any school experience that I have had. Through some of the faculty, Dr. Robert Cook, president of King's, had invited Faith at Work, a group here in the city that have been ministering, seeking to establish fellowship groups in offices and businesses. Red Cap 42, Roland Young, is a member of Faith at Work, and every Monday, Wednesday and Friday he is on tract 13 at Grand Central. He has a fellowship group in a car that is spotted on the track for his use, by the railroad. And so from track 13 right on up to many of the most imposing businesses in the city, there are groups of people that meet under the auspices of Faith at Work, quite free and independent, but this is simply a stimulating group. So, Faith at Work was invited to send a team to King's College, and about 15 came. They were executives from various businesses, business men for the most part, and women, and I think three housewives. They took two days of their own time. They were not paid even expenses. They came just to have fellowship with the students. The students were required to attend Tuesday morning at 9 and at 10:30. There were two meetings in the morning, and an optional meeting in the afternoon. It was a sharing meeting.

Mr. Harold Hill stood before a group. He is the president of his company. They handle diesel equipment. He looked into the face of these students, divided right through. They were not from one particular class, but just divided up through the four years of college. Eight years ago, said Mr. Hill, I was a hopeless alcoholic, and I had tried everything that could be offered. I had lost my family. I had lost my business. I had lost my health, and I had lost my hope. When in my desperation and brokenness, someone told me of Jesus Christ, and He has come into my heart, setting me free from 22 years of bondage to alcohol, giving me back my health, giving me back my family, giving me back my business, and I am simply here to tell you students that Jesus Christ makes all the difference.

College students have a tendency to be a little blasé you know, and a little too smart for their teachers, and just a trifle tendency to feel that all this is somewhat beyond them, especially in Christian colleges, perhaps more so than in any others. Because it is too common there, and they have church chapel every day, and classes open with prayer, and it just loses its edge. But when a business man takes two days of his own time to come and stand in front of a group of Christian college students and tell them that he is there because he wants to share the Lord Jesus with them, do you know what happened? One or two of those students who were in that group came to me and said, Mr. Reidhead, as I heard Mr. Hill speak, I realized that all I had was words about Jesus. He had never come into my heart. And He came in.

You see, these business men were prepared to share. They were prepared to come and to share the Lord Jesus with students that had as much opportunity. But it was terribly important. When I preached Tuesday night, I want you to know it was an entirely different group that I faced. It was not just that they shared Christ, but they also shared their failure and their needs, and they impressed upon the students that they need not have a facade, and they need not have pretense, that they could be perfectly honest with one another. It was amazing. Such reception was given to the ministry on Tuesday night. Then Wednesday the classes continued. And Wednesday night, even a greater difference than on the night before. The nearest thing I have ever seen to Revival on a college campus I saw there, and I would trace it not to the ministry of the one who stands before you, but to the fact that twelve or fifteen business people came and were prepared to enter into an experience of koinonea, sharing. And there was brokenness, and people were willing to admit their failure. And they went to each other and said, I've lied about you. Please forgive me. They went to teachers, and said, I've cheated on my examinations. I am prepared to lose my credit. There was brokenness. There was sharing.

This is what this word means. This is what it means. It does not just mean brokenness. It does not just mean confession. It means that when it is necessary. But it does not just mean that. It begins there, but it does not stop there. It begins with honesty in one's heart. It begins in transparent honesty and desire to be right, and a willingness to break. This is where it begins, but it does not stop there. It goes on to share forgiveness. He shared His Blood, and so it was an experience... You know, if you forgive me, and I forgive you, there is a far greater understanding and sympathy perhaps than there would have been had there not been necessity for forgiveness. And when one says, You know, I am troubled constantly by it, and breaks, and a group of people can stop and with tears, O God, meet his need, there is sharing.

Now I personally believe that this is what the word fellowship means. It is koinonea, sharing failure, sharing victory, sharing truth, sharing the Lord Jesus. The reason why we have such great difficulty in witnessing is because we have so little experience in sharing. Now the amazing thing is (and I hope your Bible is still open to Acts 2) in the 42nd vs it says, "They continued in fellowship." Now I want you to go down and notice the last word in the 44th vs. "And they that believed were together, and they had all things in fellowship." It is the same word, koinonea. So it wasn't just that they shared their need, they shared their failure, they shared their victories, but they shared their life. I do not know what it is going to mean when God gets the way He wants, but you know communism is sweeping the world because it is an ideology that has affected people to the place where they are prepared to share everything, release everything, and give everything, in pursuit of a common goal. And you realize, of course, that the reason the Watch Tower can print so much literature is because people work over there in that big building on the other side of the East River for \$10 a month. They are prepared to come and give up their businesses, and they just come into bare subsistence and survival in order that they can share the teachings of Watch Tower with the world. That is why they can print so many more millions of pages than we evangelicals can. And you recognize, of course, that there is an economic aspect to this, with the Catholic Church expanding as fast as it is, because priests and nuns receive no salary and own nothing, and they just give their lives in a great outpouring. And then of course, we come to the other factor that we have not found a vehicle for young people, and older people as well in America that want to give everything for Christ. We have for missions. If you want to go to the mission field, we have a channel for the giving of your life. But if you want to give your life in America and do not feel God is calling you beyond the three mile limits, we have no vehicle for the pouring out of life, in the same manner.

I was relating to one of our number yesterday about Bethany Fellowship out in Minneapolis, where 5 Lutheran families asked the question, How can we give our lives more perfectly to Christ? And they felt, just not by any text, just that it was practical, they would sell their homes, they would pool the money that they had, they would live together and eat from a common dining room, and each take a responsibility, and so now they have outgrown that place, they have bought a farm out in South

Minneapolis, there is a Bible School of a hundred students, a staff of about a hundred, they have a large factory that makes trailers for camping, and then they make electrical appliances, they have a print shop that covers about an acre and a half of ground that grew from a little offset press that one of the women felt would be useful for missionary letters and various things have been done; and 56 missionaries are supported in part by the church, and 33 or 34 are supported entirely by the Fellowship from the profit over and above the needs for the school and the students. When a student goes in, he takes \$150.00 and that is all he has to pay for 4 years of education. The time he spends in the other work covers the other. And because of that there has been a penetration of life. I am not advocating that. That is not my point in reciting it. I am simply saying that somewhere this matter of koinonea has implications beyond which I am prepared to dogmatize at the moment.

I do not know what the ultimate extension of it is. I do not know where God will lead us or you, or me. But this I do know, that your progress in the months of this winter is going to be almost limited and restricted, and determined by the degree to which you are prepared to enter into a fellowship, not only with the Father and the Son, but a fellowship with other believers in an openness, a frankness, a sharing of your need, your failure, and of the glorious victory, and triumph, and blessing, and presence, and power of our risen Christ. You will never understand the importance of that early church, unless you understand the importance of fellowship to the early church. Koinonea. As I say, I am a babe. I cannot lead you any further than this. I only know that God has been bringing to my heart a new openness, and a new frankness, a new hunger, a new yearning and new longing. I haven't been this way, and say, Follow. I can simply say, This I believe is the way God wants His people to go. I saw at King's College the spiritual effect of a people that were prepared to enter in as best they knew in a koinonea, a sharing, and fellowship in openness. I do not know what it can mean to you, or to me. But I do believe we set definite limits upon our relationship with Christ unless we do move in the direction of frank, open, sincere, Christian fellowship, koinonea, communion, sharing, and participation. I would love to see what God could do with you and me, if like them we can continue stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, with all it means to Him. Let us pray.

To some of you this may be the night when the Spirit of God is moving upon your heart to open the doors of your heart to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to come in to forgive you and pardon you. To some, it may be the time when God has shown you that you ought to become absolutely honest and frank with yourself and your need, your failure. And this could be the time when you could begin a koinonea, and a fellowship of sharing experience. You have been out of fellowship with God. You have been backslidden, and your heart is barren, and you are burdened, and you do not want to go as you came. To others, there may be a desire to commit to the Lord Jesus in new way and in new levels your whole being, your whole life. I believe that it would be well if we were to take just one moment and say that if God has spoken to you concerning something that He wants you to do that you do it. This will be our procedure. You stand right where you are to indicate that you are one to whom the Lord is speaking. In a moment when others have stood with you, you and some will go with you into the room to my right, called Wilson Chapel, where we can have a time undisturbed in prayer and conversation. We do not want to talk about fellowship without giving opportunity for it. So if God has spoken to you, and you know there is reason why you ought to stay, would you stand right now. Either as unsaved, wanting Him to become Lord and Savior, or as a Christian with a spiritual need. We will just wait for a moment. This is your invitation. Your opportunity. Are there some? I wonder if there are those that would say by an upraised hand, I see my need. I have not been prepared to stand and go as you said into the room for prayer, but I request prayer, I desire it, I need it. Would you raise your hands, to take this degree of move toward God? Thank you, yes, I see it. Are there others? Yes I see it. I see it. All right. Let us stand together and be dismissed.

Now, our Heavenly Father, we have stood before Thee, speaking in behalf of the Lord Jesus to this people that Thou dost want fellowship. We do not understand all that this means. Perhaps even much of what it means. We know it begins with honesty. We know it begins with frankness, and openness. We know it begins with brokenness, but where it leads we do not know. But we want to know, Father. We believe that Thou art desirous in this day and period of time to get here in New York City a people that can be a vehicle to show what the Lord Jesus Christ can do when He is given the chance He asks for. We want to be part of that people. And so, take the impressions, and the teachings, and the truth of the night, and bind them upon our hearts. Send us away to think, study, to pray, and lead us together, all, into and unto what Thou hast for us. May it be said of us, our Father, that they continued stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Bless the young people and College and Career as they go to their meeting. Bless us as we part. And let any with spiritual need stay to make it known. We ask for Jesus sake. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, October 21, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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