

The Joys and Privileges of "Fellowship one with another."

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"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122: 1). "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For The LORD is good" (Psalm 100: 4, 5). "Let us go up . . . unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness" (Jeremiah 31: 6, 7). These, and many other Scriptures, depict the blessedness and joy of the people of God as they move *together* in relation to His interests. In his second chapter Isaiah speaks of the great gain such movements afford — "He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths," and Zechariah tells of the wholesome way in which others are affected — "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; *I will go also*". "Yea, many people . . . shall come to seek the LORD" (Zech. 8: 21, 22). What precious results such movements yield — praise and thanksgiving to God; gladness of heart in an increased knowledge of God's holy ways, a deepening desire to walk as pleasing to Him, and a testimony which draws others to Himself!

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, having spoken by the Spirit of the "better things" which mark the Christian faith, indicates in his exhortations that these "better things" are to be enjoyed in fellowship one with another. "Let us consider *one another* to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10: 24, 25). Happy indeed the desire of the apostle that Christian fellowship should continue and increase as having the return of our Lord in view!

Reference to some of the Old Testament Scriptures which speak of Hebron may prove helpful. The name "Hebron" indicates "company," or "place of association," and a connotation of the word suggests the additional feature of "charm." In spite of much outward breakdown and failure there is still an outstanding and unique joy to be experienced in the company of those who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John introduces us to a realm of light and life and love in which "we have fellowship with one another."

The first mention of Hebron is in Genesis 13 — "Abram . . . dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron" (v. 18, New Trans.). "Mamre" indicates "stability;" how good it is, in a world characterized by disintegration and uncertainty, to find a home for our affections in a circle established in the purpose of God before the tarnished cities of men were in evidence (Numbers 13: 24). Abram enjoyed congenial company at Hebron — he had as "allies" Aner and Eshcol (see Numbers 14: 24). Aner means "a waterfall" and Eshcol is "a cluster of grapes." Would not this speak of the refreshing streams of joy and the sweetness which is to be found in the company of the people of God! The free movement of the blessed Spirit of God as he calls attention to the preciousness of Christ! Then Abram had "trained servants" in his house — 318 of them — a disciplined dwelling producing features usable in the interests of the brethren. Above all else there was response in the heart of Abram to God Himself — he "built there an altar unto the LORD." Precious indeed the results of finding one's home amongst the people of God — the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit as He speaks of the glories of Christ; affections held in godly care and discipline, power in testimony, and hearts responding happily in praise and worship to God. Contrariwise Lot chose the outward attractiveness of the world and dwelt in Sodom. He had no "allies" there; his own household had little appreciation of him; no ray of Christ's

glory and preciousness could lighten such a dwelling, for spiritually it is the place "where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11: 8). We do not wonder at the disaster which overtook that home — the dwelling of a "just man" in wrong circumstances!

Brief references to other Scriptures will suffice. After many years of wandering Jacob came to Hebron (Genesis 35: 27) and *from there* he sent Joseph to enquire after the welfare of his brethren (Genesis 37: 14). As we enjoy that of which Hebron speaks we would surely desire that many of God's people might be brought to an appreciation of this precious fellowship. Joseph's service involved him in reproach and misunderstanding, but eventually he had the joy of communion with them, and "Joseph nourished . . . his brethren" (Genesis 47: 12). Paul in his care for all the churches; Timothy in his genuine desires for the saints; Epaphras in his fervent prayers, are a few of those who sought the "welfare of the brethren" — a happy service open to all.

The books of Joshua and Judges record that the possessing of Hebron involved conflict, but the faith of Caleb, a man "who fully followed" the Lord overcame, and dispossessing the three sons of Anak, he took possession. Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmi may represent a three-fold cord not easily broken, but God given faith lays hold of God given resources and triumphantly enters into the enjoyment of God given blessings.

Hebron was one of the "cities of refuge" (1 Chronicles 6: 57); an atmosphere of safety and mercy is to be found there. It was a "fortified city" (2 Chronicles 11: 10); it was the place from which the victory of Samson (a man of faith — Hebrews 11) over the Philistines could be viewed (Judges 16: 3). Safety, strength, victory are all to be enjoyed *now* in that of which Hebron speaks — the company of the people of God.

But perhaps the most precious lesson we may learn in relation to Hebron is to be found in 2 Samuel 5: 1, and 1 Chronicles 12: 38, where we see all Israel, keeping rank, with a *perfect* heart, and of *one heart*, moving "before the Lord" to anoint David — God's beloved — as king. The Scripture in Chronicles enlarges upon the scene of joy and blessing which followed — "there was joy in Israel."

Thus, beloved brethren, we have the privilege of moving together in a scene replete with every blessing which divine love has provided; where the Spirit of God maintains a ministry of freshness and power as He engages our hearts with Christ; where living affections in the saints expend themselves upon the welfare of others; an atmosphere of peace and security and spiritual power; and where hearts are knit together with one desire only — the supremacy of the true David, God's Beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.