**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 16**

**Questions: *What is our relationship to churches and denominations of other confessions. Can we call Roman Catholics or Protestants “brother’s in Christ”. Should we attend their worship? Should we cooperate with them in ministry? Social Issues? Should we pray together?***

1. ***What is our relationship to churches and denominations of other confessions.*** 
   1. God forbids outward fellowship with other Christians who officially hold to and persist in false doctrine. The infallible sign of Christian fellowship is what we call “altar and pulpit fellowship” (i.e., Communion and Preaching). This means that you are necessarily expressing fellowship with whoever you share communion with, and whoever you approve to preach in the church.
      1. There may be other areas where fellowship is expressed given the circumstances, e.g., prayer, singing, et.al. The consciencious Christian should be concerned about what his actions communicate to his neighbor.
   2. (1 Cor 8:7-13) **7**However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. **8**Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9**But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? **11**And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. **12**Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.
2. ***Can we call Roman Catholics or Protestants “brothers in Christ”.*** 
   1. There is no biblical rule, however it seems right that anyone who holds to the Primary Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity are truly brothers and sister’s in Christ.
      1. This does not mean that we are to share communion with them, or to allow them to preach and teach in our churches. They are brothers (and sisters) yet erring brothers and sisters.
      2. **(2 Thess 3:14-15) 14**If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. **15**Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.
3. ***Should we attend their worship?*** 
   1. There is nothing sinful about attending other worship services of Christian churches. However, you should be considerate and aware of your degree of participation, based on whether you are expressing fellowship with false doctrine, thereby causing others to stumble based on your carelessness.
      1. E.g. you may bow your head in prayer at a Roman Catholic Service, however, you should be cautious, lest when they pray to Mary you give the impression of doing the same.
4. ***Should we cooperate with them in ministry?*** 
   1. No, not in Word and sacrament ministry in the church. This is because their false doctrine will undermine the pure gospel of Christ, even as a little leaven leavens the whole loaf. They have their church and worship; we have ours until they wish to work through their false doctrine with us and renounce it. To cooperate with heterodox denominations in worship is traditionally declaimed as “Unionism”.
5. ***Social Issues?*** 
   1. Individual Christians may align with other Christians, or other unbelievers in social issues that are grounded in the natural law, such as anti-abortion, euthanasia (murder), etc. They may ever reference the Law of God as the foundation, even if they confess God falsely otherwise.
   2. However, we must be careful to keep a bright line between unity in political advocacy, and worship. Signing an anti-abortion petition along with others is different than publically praying with them.
6. ***Should we pray together?***
   1. Individually, we can pray with other Christians, though guardedly and not in a way that gives ground to false doctrine and confession. As a church body, our church should not cooperate with another heterodox church in holding joint worship services, or prayer services. (i.e., Joint Prayer is forbidden).
      1. - Prayer fellowship is the full unity of the Spirit between brothers in Christ and is only perfectly known by God...that is, whether in prayer the hearts and minds of participants are truly one.
      2. - Joint prayer is outwardly praying together, and can be fully known by man, because it is outwardly discerned by the confession held by the one or more persons leading the prayer in a Worship service, as well as the confession of the bulk of the present congregation.
      3. - Individual prayer is praying "as an individual before God" albeit next to another individual whose heart is not know, but who may outwardly adheres to false doctrine, either fundamental (necessary for salvation) or non-fundamental.
   2. Individually, we must never pray with those of false religions, such as Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc, because they pray to idols. To pray or worship with those of other religions is traditionally declaimed as “Syncretism”.