

## Excerpts from Life-study of First John, Message 5

### **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DIVINE LIFE**

#### **Bible Verses:**

- 1 John 1:3** That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 1:4** And these things we write that our joy may be made full.
- 1 John 1:5** And this is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

In the Gospel of John Jesus Christ is revealed as the divine life for us to receive. When we believe in Him, He comes into us, and we have Him as life within. As the continuation of the Gospel of John, this Epistle shows us that after receiving the divine life, we may have the fellowship of life as the issue of the divine life. The fellowship of the divine life is the real enjoyment of the divine life. In other words, if we would

experience the divine life, we need to pay close attention to the fellowship of this life.

The fellowship of the divine life is the issue and flow of the divine life. Because the divine life is organic, rich, moving, and active, it has a particular issue, a certain kind of outcome. The issue, the outcome, of the divine life is the fellowship of life.

The fellowship of the divine life is clearly portrayed in Revelation 22:1. In this verse we see that in the New Jerusalem the river of the water of life flows out from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The throne of God and of the Lamb is the throne of the redeeming God, the Lamb-God. In Genesis 1:1 we have God, but in Revelation 22:1 we have God with the Lamb. In Genesis we have the creating God, but in Revelation we have the redeeming God. Out of this redeeming God as the source flows the river of water of life. The flow of the river of water of life is the fellowship of life. This means that fellowship is the outflow of the divine life from within the redeeming God.

According to the picture in Revelation, the river in the New Jerusalem flows downward in a spiral until

it reaches the twelve gates of the city. By this we can see that the entire city of the New Jerusalem is supplied by the flow of this living water; that is, it is supplied by the fellowship of life. The fellowship of the divine life flows out of God and through His people in order to reach every part of the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

The fellowship of the divine life, or the flow of the divine life, is the fellowship of the Spirit. Second Corinthians 13:14 says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Here we see that the love of God is the source, that the grace of Christ is the course, and that the fellowship of the Spirit is the flow of the course. It is this flow that brings the grace of Christ and the love of God to us for our enjoyment. Therefore, the fellowship of the divine life is called the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

The fellowship of the divine life is a fellowship between the believers and the apostles (1 John 1:3b; Acts 2:42). This means that there is a joint enjoyment of the Triune God among the believers and the apostles. The believers and the apostles need to have

contact with one another. When there is the proper contact, there will be a two-way traffic, and this traffic is fellowship, a common participation. When we have this two-way traffic, we enjoy the divine life that is within us. This means that when we have fellowship, we have the enjoyment of the divine life.

The more of this two-way traffic we have, the better it will be. The more we contact the apostles, the more we shall enjoy the divine life. However, some may point out that the apostles are no longer with us. This is true, but we still have the writings of the apostles. Whenever we come to the apostles' writings, we may have the sense of being brought into fellowship with the apostles and enjoying the two-way traffic between us and them. Then in this traffic we enjoy the divine life together with them.

The fellowship of the divine life is between the believers and the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. John says that first the believers have fellowship with the apostles through the divine life. Then he says that the apostles have fellowship with the Father and the Son. By this we see that fellowship joins the believers to the apostles and to the Father and the Son. Therefore, in

this fellowship there is the full oneness of the divine life.

Fellowship is the issue of the eternal life; and joy, that is, the enjoyment of the Triune God, is the issue of this fellowship, the issue of participation in the Father's love and the Son's grace through the Spirit. By such a spiritual enjoyment of the divine life, our joy in the Triune God may be made full.

We do not usually regard joy as a major item. But in this Epistle, joy is the third matter of major importance to be covered, coming after the divine life and the fellowship of the divine life. The divine life issues in fellowship, and fellowship issues in joy.

God's salvation makes us joyful and causes us to rejoice and exult. Therefore, when we gather together, we should be joyful. Hence, the apostle John tells us that if we enjoy the fellowship of the divine life, we shall surely be full of joy.

In 1:5 John says, "And this is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." In addition to the three main things in the preceding verses—life, fellowship, and joy—a further message,

which the apostles have heard from the Lord, is to announce to the believers that God is light. First we have the divine life, and then out of this we have the fellowship of the divine life. Fellowship issues in joy. When we are in this joyful element of the fellowship, we are in the light of God. Therefore, the sequence is life, fellowship, joy, and light.

The expression, “God is light,” like “God is love” in 4:8 and 16, and “God is Spirit” in John 4:24, is used not in a metaphoric sense but in a predicative sense. These expressions denote and describe the nature of God. In His nature God is Spirit, love, and light. Spirit denotes the nature of God’s Person; love, the nature of God’s essence; and light, the nature of God’s expression. When this divine love appears to us, it becomes grace, and when this divine light shines upon us, it becomes truth. John’s Gospel reveals that the Lord Jesus has brought grace and truth to us (John 1:14, 17) that we may have the divine life (John 3:14-16), whereas his Epistle unveils that the fellowship of the divine life brings us to the very sources of grace and truth, which are the divine love and the divine light. His Epistle is the continuation of his Gospel. In his

Gospel it was God in the Son coming to us as grace and truth that we may become His children (John 1:12-13). In his Epistle it is we, the children, in the fellowship of the Father's life, coming to the Father to participate in His love and light. The former was God coming out to the outer court to meet our need at the altar (Lev. 4:28-31); the latter is we entering into the Holy of Holies to contact Him at the ark (Exo. 25:22). This is further and deeper in the experience of the divine life.

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