

# THE EXPERIENCE, GROWTH, AND MINISTRY OF LIFE FOR THE BODY

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

## Living in the Fellowship of the Divine Life

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:2-7, 9

- I. We need to enter into the vertical and horizontal aspects of the fellowship of the divine life:**
- A. The fellowship is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life; it is illustrated by the flow of the river of water of life in the New Jerusalem—Rev. 22:1.
  - B. First John 1:2-3 and 6-7 reveal that the fellowship of the divine life has both a vertical aspect and a horizontal aspect:
    - 1. First John 1:2-3 says, “(And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us); 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”:
      - a. The vertical aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with the Triune God; the horizontal aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with one another.
      - b. The initial experience of the apostles was vertical, but when the apostles reported the eternal life to others, they experienced the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship.
    - 2. Verse 6 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth”; this is the vertical aspect of fellowship.
    - 3. Verse 7 says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”; this is the horizontal aspect of fellowship.
  - C. We need to see the relationship between the vertical and horizontal aspects of the divine fellowship:
    - 1. If you do not have the proper fellowship with the Lord, it is difficult to have fellowship with your fellow believers; in the same way, if you do not have the proper fellowship with your fellow believers, it is difficult to have fellowship with the Lord; the reason for this is that the divine fellowship is one fellowship—Acts 2:42.
    - 2. When we are not in this fellowship in a practical way, we are out of the Spirit, out of the Triune God, and out of the divine life—cf. 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 2:1.
    - 3. We should try to have fellowship with our fellow believers as much as possible; this divine fellowship not only corrects us; it also molds us and even reconstitutes us; this fellowship brings the divine constituent into our spiritual being, causing a change in our being.
    - 4. Fellowship also indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining

with others for a certain common purpose; hence, to live in the divine fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 3:6, 12.

- D. The divine fellowship is the reality of living in the Body of Christ:
  - 1. The reason that the Lord has not yet come back (Rev. 22:20) is that the believers are individualistic, independent, opinionated, and divided.
  - 2. By being restricted in the divine fellowship, the Body of Christ is kept in oneness, and the work of the ministry continues to go on; the thing that makes everything alive is fellowship—Eph. 4:11-12; cf. Ezek. 47:9.
- E. The fellowship of life, the inner flow of life, results in joy and in the inner shining, the inner ruling, of the light of life—1 John 1:4-5; John 1:4; 8:12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:13.

## **II. We need to enter into the two aspects of the divine fellowship by the two spirits:**

- A. We need to enter into the vertical aspect of the divine fellowship by the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit—13:14; 2 Tim. 4:22:
  - 1. The Spirit Himself is the fellowship because the fellowship is the flow, the current, of the Spirit; this is like saying that the current of electricity is just the electricity itself; the current of electricity is electricity in motion.
  - 2. In the same way, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 2 Corinthians 13:14 is the Spirit in motion; the grace of Christ is Christ Himself enjoyed by us, the love of God is God Himself tasted by us, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself moving within us.
- B. We need to enter into the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship by the human spirit—Phil. 2:1; Rev. 1:10:
  - 1. If we are going to have real fellowship horizontally with one another, we need to exercise our spirit—1 Tim. 4:7.
  - 2. If we exercise our spirit, we will never talk in a worldly manner, speak negatively about the saints or the churches, or gossip about others' mistakes and failures; when we exercise our spirit, the nature of our conversation will change because our spirit is holy—2 Cor. 6:6.
- C. The horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship; this interwoven fellowship is the real fellowship:
  - 1. When we fellowship with one another in a genuine way by exercising our spirit, we are eager to pray and contact the Lord; this shows how close the relationship is between the vertical and horizontal aspects of fellowship.
  - 2. Our horizontal fellowship with the saints brings us into vertical fellowship with the Lord; then our vertical fellowship with the Lord brings us into horizontal fellowship with the saints.
- D. The divine fellowship is everything in the Christian life:
  - 1. Just as the current of electricity is the electricity itself, the fellowship of the divine life, the flow of the divine life, is the divine life itself.
  - 2. Our Christian life is a life of the fellowship of the divine life.
  - 3. The apostles wanted to have fellowship with the believers—this is horizontal

fellowship; then the apostles stated that their fellowship was with the Triune God—this is vertical fellowship.

4. We should be vertically fellowshiping with the Lord and, at the same time, be horizontally fellowshiping with one another.
5. Eventually, in this divine fellowship God is interwoven with us; this interweaving is the mingling of God with man.
6. We must realize that when fellowship disappears, God also disappears; God comes as the fellowship.

### **III. Our fellowship is deepened through the cross:**

- A. In the whole universe there is only one thing that takes away all the obstacles between God and us—the cross.
- B. Verse 6 of hymn #737 in *Hymns* says, “Fellowship is deepened / Thru the cross of death; / Fellowship is lifted / By the Spirit’s breath”; without the Spirit and the cross, we cannot have real fellowship.
- C. The first line of *Hymns*, #279 says, “First the blood, and then the ointment”:
  1. The blood is a strong sign of the cross, and the ointment is a type of the all-inclusive, compound Spirit.
  2. These two elements are mentioned in Leviticus 14:6-10 and 14-18; in this portion of the Word, we are told that a leper, signifying an unclean sinner, is to be cleansed first by the blood; upon the base of the blood, then the oil, the ointment, is applied:
    - a. The blood and the ointment are applied to the lobe of the leper’s right ear, to the thumb of his right hand, and to the big toe of his right foot; the ear signifies our listening to the word of God, the hand signifies our doing the things of God, and the foot signifies our taking the ways of God.
    - b. Spiritually speaking, leprosy is composed of the wrong hearing, the wrong working, and the wrong walking; because we are lepers, we need first to be cleansed by Christ’s redeeming blood, and then upon the blood we need the anointing oil.
    - c. Consummately, our cleansing is by the divine fellowship of the Spirit based upon the cleansing blood of Christ.
- D. The divine fellowship is the dispensing of the Triune God into us, the tripartite men, making us and God one; the Greek word for *fellowship* means “joint participation,” and this joint participation issues in oneness:
  1. Actually, fellowship is just oneness; when God is fellowshiping with us, and when we are fellowshiping with God, that makes God and us one.
  2. In the whole universe there is a big oneness, and this big oneness is the divine fellowship.
  3. The Lord desires to make us all one as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one; in John 17 the Lord prayed, “That they may be one, even as We are one” (v. 22b); the church’s oneness is a part of the divine oneness of the Divine Trinity (v. 21a).
  4. Eventually, the church and the Divine Trinity are one in fellowship—14:21, 23.

- E. We must experience the cross in order to be thoroughly in the divine fellowship:
1. Because there is an obstacle within us toward another brother, our fellowship with him is not that thorough; we may avoid contact with certain saints because of the obstacles within us to the divine fellowship.
  2. Our fellowship is not thorough, and obstacles remain within us because we do not have the cross in our experience—Gal. 2:20a.
  3. *Hymns*, #631 says, “If no death, no life”; this means, “If no cross, no Christ”; furthermore, “If no Christ, no Spirit; and if no Spirit, no fellowship.”
  4. In Matthew 16:24 the Lord said, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me”; the Lord used the words *his cross*, indicating that there is a particular portion of the cross for each one of us in order to cross each one of us out.
  5. Actually, to bear the cross is to deny the self, to put the self to death, to apply the cross of Christ to the self all the time.
  6. In order for us to have the horizontal fellowship, we need to deny ourselves; to deny ourselves means to be senseless about ourselves; then we can never be offended.
  7. We need the experience of the cross to deepen our experience of the divine fellowship—cf. 1 John 1:9.

#### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

##### **THE VERTICAL ASPECT OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The divine fellowship has two aspects: the vertical aspect between God and us and the horizontal aspect among the believers. The horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship is by the human spirit. The vertical aspect of the divine fellowship is by the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Tim. 4:22). The word *by* is actually not strong enough to express what we mean. The Spirit is not merely involved, wrapped up, or mingled with the fellowship. The Spirit Himself is the fellowship because the fellowship is the flow, the current, of the Spirit. This is like saying that the current of electricity is just the electricity itself. The current of electricity is electricity in motion. When the electricity stops, the current of electricity also stops. In the same way, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 2 Corinthians 13:14 is the Spirit moving. The grace of Christ is Christ Himself enjoyed by us; the love of God is God Himself tasted by us; and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself moving within us. The divine fellowship is the Holy Spirit Himself.

Without the divine Spirit, there is no fellowship. The Spirit is the very element of the fellowship. When a stand is made of wood, wood is the element of the stand. Likewise, if a stand is made of steel, steel is the element of the stand. If you take away the element, the stand ceases to exist. It is the same with the divine fellowship. If you take away the Spirit, the divine fellowship disappears.

##### **THE HORIZONTAL ASPECT OF THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP BY THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

We need to enter into the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship by the human spirit (Phil. 2:1; Rev. 1:10). If we are going to have real fellowship horizontally with

one another, we need to exercise our spirit. If we exercise our spirit, we will never talk in a worldly manner or speak negatively about the saints or the churches. A local church can be severely damaged if many of the saints in that locality spend time speaking negative things about other saints and other churches. Such discussions spread gossip and death among the saints. This kind of contact between the saints is not the fellowship of spirit that Paul spoke about in Philippians 2. In Philippians 2:1-2 Paul said, “If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions, make my joy full...” Paul seemed to be saying, “Brothers, if you have any fellowship with me in spirit, your fellowship will be my encouragement and consolation. Then you will make my joy full.”

Real fellowship is by our spirit. When we exercise our spirit, we are unable to talk about worldly amusements and entertainment. When we exercise our spirit, the nature of our conversation will change because our spirit is holy (cf. 2 Cor. 6:6). If there are problems in a certain church, we may have a desire to merely talk about the situation, but our spirit within will urge us to pray. Our spirit will not allow us to gossip about others’ mistakes and failures. The only way to have the reality of horizontal fellowship is by exercising our spirit.

The two aspects of the divine fellowship require us to be in the two spirits, the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. These two spirits eventually become one (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). When Paul charges us to walk according to spirit in Romans 8:4, he is speaking of the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with our human spirit. When we exercise our spirit to carry out the divine fellowship, we are fully sanctified, rescued, and saved from everything other than Christ. To be victorious, overcoming, sanctified, and transformed, we must exercise our spirit to carry out the two aspects of the divine fellowship.

#### **THE INTERWOVEN FELLOWSHIP INCLUDING THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL ASPECTS**

The horizontal and vertical aspects of the divine fellowship are very closely related. We can see this from our experience. Sometimes we may talk about other saints under the pretense of having fellowship about their situation, but our conversation is actually gossip. Afterwards, we often cannot pray because our praying spirit is quenched by our gossip. But when we fellowship in a genuine way by exercising our spirit, we are eager to pray and contact the Lord. This shows how close the relationship is between the vertical and horizontal aspects of fellowship. The horizontal fellowship ushers us into the vertical fellowship. If two brothers exercise their spirit to have genuine, proper, horizontal fellowship, they will eventually be ushered into a very honest and sincere intercession. When they pray together, the two aspects of the divine fellowship are interwoven. The horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship. This interwoven fellowship is the real fellowship.

Fellowship cannot have just one aspect alone. You cannot have the vertical fellowship without the horizontal fellowship. If you have a good time with the Lord in vertical fellowship, you will be eager to see the other saints in order to have

fellowship with them. Once you have fellowship with the saints through prayer, you are brought into vertical fellowship with the Lord again. Your horizontal fellowship with the saints brings you into vertical fellowship with the Lord. Then your fellowship with the Lord brings you into horizontal fellowship with the saints. Thus, these two aspects are always interwoven, that is, they are always crisscrossing each other.

When we have the proper view of the divine fellowship with its two aspects, we will thank the Lord that we have the opportunity to fellowship with other saints. Every day as we fellowship with the Lord, we are ushered into fellowship with other saints. The more we have this kind of fellowship, the more we will sing and praise the Lord together. There is not much singing and praising among us because we are short of the divine fellowship.

#### **THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP BEING EVERYTHING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

Just as the current of electricity is the electricity itself, the fellowship of the divine life, the flow of the divine life, is the divine life itself. We can say that electrical appliances live an “electrical life,” a life of the current of electricity. Similarly, our Christian life is a life of the fellowship of the divine life. The New Testament reveals that the Christian meeting, the Christian married life, and the Christian work are just the divine fellowship. The divine fellowship is everything in the Christian life. Those who were saved in Acts 2 were brought into and continued steadfastly in the apostles’ fellowship (v. 42). Later in the New Testament, the divine fellowship is called the fellowship of the Father and of His Son (1 John 1:3), the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), and the fellowship of spirit (Phil. 2:1).

In John’s first Epistle, he speaks of the divine fellowship. First John 1:2-3 says, “And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard we report also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed the fellowship which is ours is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” The apostles wanted to have fellowship with the believers; this is horizontal fellowship. Then the apostles stated that their fellowship was with the Triune God; this is vertical fellowship. The vertical fellowship brings us into the horizontal fellowship. The horizontal fellowship then brings us into the vertical fellowship on a larger scale. This larger scale of fellowship is the meetings.

Today, we stress the new way, the God-ordained way, to meet and to serve. We must realize that the new way will issue in a different kind of meeting than we presently have. In meetings according to the new way, everyone will be full of the enjoyment of Christ, participating in the vertical and horizontal aspects of the divine fellowship. The meeting itself will be a fellowship. Today, however, our meetings are not like this. They have not come up to the standard of the vision we have seen concerning the proper meetings.

All the functioning in the meetings should be an expression of the divine fellowship. To prophesy is an expression of this fellowship. To testify is also a part of this

fellowship. To read a verse from the Bible to the saints in the Lord's table may also be a small part of this fellowship. The entire meeting should be a fellowship. We should be vertically fellowshiping with the Lord and, at the same time, be horizontally fellowshiping with one another.

Eventually, in this divine fellowship God is interwoven with us. This interweaving is the mingling of God with man. All of the meetings should be an interwoven fellowship with both the vertical and horizontal aspects. Our married life should also be an interwoven fellowship. The husband and the wife should not only be interwoven with each other but also with the Lord. The real Christian marriage should be the divine fellowship. Our coordination and work together should also be the divine fellowship.

We must realize that when fellowship disappears, God also disappears. God comes as the fellowship. Today our meetings, our married life, the coordination among the co-workers, and the fellowship among the local churches are abnormal because we are short of this fellowship. Today there is not enough fellowship among the local churches, and the churches are not absolutely one in the fellowship.

The divine fellowship is everything in the Christian life. The apostle Paul lived in this fellowship. When we live in the divine fellowship, our Christian life becomes very living, active, and full of impact. We need to fully enter into the experience of the divine fellowship in its two aspects by the two spirits. (*The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man*, pp. 149-150, 152-155)