

HWMR: EXPERIENCING, ENJOYING, AND EXPRESSING CHRIST (3)
(Week 11)

The Fellowship of the Eternal Life— the Reality of Living in the Body of Christ
Scripture Reading: *1 John 1:1—2:2*

- 1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life
- 1 John 1:2 (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);
- 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.
- 1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth;
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
- 1 John 1:8 If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
- 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous;
- 1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world.

Day 1

- 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.
- Rev. 22:1* - And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

I. John's Epistles (especially his first Epistle) unfold the **mystery of the fellowship of the eternal life—1 John 1:3-4, 6-7:**

- A. **Fellowship** is the **flow of the eternal life within** all the believers, illustrated by the flow of the water of life in the New Jerusalem; the reality of the Body of Christ, the church life in actuality, is the **flow of the Lord Jesus within** us, and this flowing One must have the preeminence within us—vv. 2-4; Rev. 22:1; Col. 1:18b; cf. Ezek. 47:1.
- B. **Fellowship** is the **flowing Triune God**—the Father is the **fountain of life**, the Son is the **spring of life**, and the Spirit is the **river of life**; this flowing issues in the totality of eternal life—the New Jerusalem—John 4:14b; Rev. 22:1-2.

- C. **Fellowship** is the **imparting of the Triune God**—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—into the believers as their unique portion and blessing for them to enjoy today and for eternity—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; Num. 6:22-27.
- D. **Fellowship** indicates a **putting away of private interests** and a joining with others for a certain common purpose; hence, to be 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.
- E. **Fellowship** comes from **teaching**; if we teach wrongly and differently from the apostles’ teaching, the teaching of God’s economy, our teaching will produce a sectarian, divisive fellowship—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:8-9; 5:18.
- F. **1 John** reveals the principles of the **divine fellowship**, **2 John** reveals that we must have **no fellowship with those who deny Christ** (vv. 7-11), and **3 John** reveals that we should stay in the **one fellowship of God’s family** by sending forward those who travel for the gospel and the ministry of the word in a manner worthy of God and by not loving to be first in the church (vv. 5-10).

Hence, in the New Testament, the apostle John first wrote his Gospel telling us that Jesus Christ was God who came in the flesh and died for us; then in resurrection He became the **life-giving Spirit to give us the eternal life**. When we believe and receive Him, He comes into us as the life-giving Spirit and gives us the eternal life. Thus, we are regenerated to become the children of God. Then John continued his writings with 1 John, telling us that whoever is regenerated with the life of God to be a child of God has this eternal life inside him and that this life brings a fellowship.

Most people do not adequately understand the meaning of fellowship; the average Christian may even think that it means “social contact.” The Bible, however, does not say social contact but **fellowship**. In Greek, this word fellowship is koinonia, which refers to several people or objects that can be mixed together and mingled thoroughly. For example, lightbulbs are mingled into one flow, because within them they all have the current of electricity from the electric plant and are all blended in one flow; hence, they have “fellowship” with one another. Therefore, we may explain fellowship as a **flow**, but we cannot say that it is a social contact.

The best illustration of fellowship is the circulation of blood in the body. The blood in the human body circulates very quickly; before we have finished speaking one sentence, the blood has already been circulating. That **circulation is a fellowship to the body**. The circulation of blood is a flow, but **to all the members of the body it is a fellowship**. Because of this fellowship our ears and our feet are connected even though they do not grow next to one another. When I am speaking here, my mouth is not the only part working, all of my members are cooperating. Even my hair is moving, and this is all because of the circulation of the blood that joins all the members in one fellowship and makes them one. (*Abiding in the Lord to Enjoy His Life, Chapter 7*)

Day 2

1 John 1:6-7 - If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

Acts 2:42 - And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles...

Day 3

2 Cor. 13:14 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Phil. 2:1 - If there is...any fellowship of spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions.

1 Cor. 10:16 - ...The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?

II. The fellowship of the eternal life is the reality of living in the Body of Christ in the oneness of the Spirit—1 Cor. 10:16-18; Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:3:

- A. We enter into the **vertical aspect** of the divine fellowship by the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to **our fellowship with the Triune God** in our loving Him—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 6; Mark 12:30.
- B. We enter into the **horizontal aspect** of the divine fellowship by the human spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to **our fellowship with one another** by the exercise of our spirit in our loving one another—Phil. 2:1; Rev. 1:10; 1 John 1:2-3, 7; 1 Cor. 16:18; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15.
- C. The one divine fellowship is an **interwoven fellowship**—the horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship:
 1. The initial experience of the apostles was the vertical fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, but when the apostles reported the eternal life to others, they experienced the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship—1 John 1:2-3; cf. Acts 2:42.
 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.
 3. We must **maintain** both the vertical and horizontal aspects of the divine fellowship in order to be healthy spiritually—cf. 1 John 1:7, 9.
- D. The **divine fellowship** is everything in the Christian life:
 1. When fellowship disappears, God also disappears; **God comes as the fellowship**—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 22:1.
 2. In this divine fellowship God is interwoven with us; this interweaving is the **mingling of God and man** to bring the divine constituent into our spiritual being for our growth and transformation in life—Lev. 2:4-5.
 3. The divine fellowship **blends** us, **tempers** us, **adjusts** us, **harmonizes** us, and **mingles** us together into one Body—1 Cor. 10:16-18; 12:24-25.

The one divine fellowship is an **interwoven fellowship**—the horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship. This is the reality of the Body of Christ. This fellowship is circulating within you and me. This is the **mingling and the building**. When we are taking care of the fellowship and there is no insulation, a lot is happening. This interweaving is actually the reality of the New Jerusalem. When we have this interwoven fellowship, we are building the New Jerusalem. May we all be attached and switched on, and may we deal with any insulation. Insulation can be very subtle. The proper church life depends on this kind of fellowship. It depends on every member being in this interwoven fellowship, this vertical and horizontal fellowship.

When a city is cut off from its power supply, chaos ensues. This is because there are no lights. When there is no light, there is chaos, fear, and anxiety. This could be our church life. It all depends on whether or not we are in **fellowship in two directions**. If we are taking care of the fellowship, then there is light in the church.

There have been times when some of the saints in certain local churches became occupied with certain situations and were in darkness, but there were other saints who remained bright, shining, and happy in the midst of those same situations. **Fellowship brings joy**. We can have our joy made full even in the midst of troubling situations. We can be the light in those situations, ministering the Triune God to those around us so that they also will look away from the situation. Look away; the Lord is still on the throne! The situation may be depressing, but we do not have to be depressed by it. We can **look away, switch on, and shine**. Praise the Lord for the interwoven fellowship.

It is very easy to have a break in the flow. To maintain the flow, we must beware of four things. The first is **sin**. We surely have to confess our sins. The second is **disobedience**. When we disobey the light, we lose the flow. The third is not taking care of the **sense of life**. We may be having “fellowship” with someone that begins well, but at a certain point, we find ourselves in darkness. It is possible to have “fellowship” in darkness. Actually, that was never really fellowship. At a certain point the conversation started to take a turn, and we started to experience death. If we pay attention to the sense of life, we can maintain the flow. We may have to say, “The Lord is on the throne. I have to go.” Maybe that is the way to end the conversation. Or maybe we should say, “Shall we pray?” That might be a good way to return to the light. **The best way to have the interwoven fellowship is to pray together**. Surely, when we pray together, there is a lot of inner flowing. Maybe we need more praying and less talking. Sometimes there needs to be more prayer in the brothers’ meetings. Through prayer we become enlightened and full of joy. We do not like to see the leading brothers lacking in joy when they are under the pressure of so many situations.

The fourth matter that causes insulation is not **following the anointing**. In a training or conference meeting, we may have a feeling to go to the microphone to speak. We may have gotten in line three times and then did not have the opportunity to speak, so we may decide that we are not going to go up again. However, it is better to be standing in the line in the light than to be sitting in our seat in darkness. We must follow the anointing. Maybe the Lord is trying to train us by giving us the feeling to go and speak. He is not really concerned with whether or not we get to speak. Maybe He just wants to train us to follow the anointing. (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 7, chapter 35*)

Day 4

John 1:29 - *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

Rom. 8:2-3 - *For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death...God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*

III. In order to remain in the enjoyment of the divine fellowship, we need to take Christ as our sin offering for the indwelling sin in our nature and as our trespass offering for the sinful deeds in our conduct—1 John 1:8-9; 3:20-21; Lev. 4:3; 5:6; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24-25:

- A. **Sin is the evil nature** of Satan, who injected himself into man through Adam's fall and has now become the sinful nature of lawlessness that is dwelling, acting, and working as a law in fallen man—Rom. 5:12, 19a, 21a; 6:14; 7:11, 14, 17-23; Psa. 51:5; 1 John 3:4; cf. 2 Thes. 2:3, 7-8.
- B. Taking Christ as our sin offering means that our old man is dealt with (Rom. 6:6), that sin in the nature of fallen man is **condemned** (8:3), that Satan as sin itself is **destroyed** (Heb. 2:14), that the world is judged, and that the ruler of the world is cast out (John 12:31):
 1. The word *ruler* in *the ruler of this world* implies authority or power and the struggle for power—Luke 4:5-8; cf. Matt. 20:20-21, 24; 3 John 9.
 2. The struggle for power is the result, the issue, of the flesh, sin, Satan, the world, and the ruler of the world—Gal. 5:16-17, 24-26.
 3. The **law of sin** in our flesh is the spontaneous power, strength, and energy to **struggle with God**; the **law of the sin offering** is the law of the life of the pneumatic Christ, whom we enjoy, to automatically and spontaneously **free us from the law of sin**—Rom. 7:23; 8:2; Lev. 6:24-30; cf. 7:1-10.
- C. We partake of Christ as our sin offering in the sense of enjoying Him as our life, the **life that bears others' sins**, so that we may be able to bear the problems of God's people by ministering Christ to them as the sin-dealing life for them to be kept in the oneness of the Spirit—1 John 5:16; Lev. 10:17.
- D. Through our genuine, intimate, living, and loving fellowship with God, who is light (1 John 1:5; Col. 1:12), **we will realize that we are sinful**, and we will take Christ as our sin offering and trespass offering:
 1. The **more we love** the Lord and enjoy Him, the **more we will know** how evil we are—Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8; Rom. 7:18.
 2. Realizing that we have a sinful nature and taking Christ as our sin offering cause us to be **judged and subdued**, and this realization **preserves us**, for it causes us not to have any confidence in ourselves—Phil. 3:3; cf. Exo. 4:6.

Day 5

Gen. 1:26 - *And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...*

Isa. 43:7 - *Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created, formed, and even made for My glory.*

Rom. 3:23 - *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

3. Man, created by God for the purpose of expressing and representing God, should be for nothing other than God and **should be absolutely for God**; thus, anything we do out of ourselves, whether good or evil, is for ourselves, and since it is for ourselves and not for God, it is sinful in the eyes of God; sin is being for the self—Gen. 1:26; Isa. 43:7; Rom. 3:23:
 - a. Serving the Lord **for ourselves** is sin; **preaching ourselves** is sin—Num. 28:2; 2 Kings 5:20-27; Matt. 7:22-23; 2 Cor. 4:5.
 - b. Doing our righteous deeds, such as giving alms, praying, and fasting, **for ourselves** to express and display ourselves is sin—Matt. 6:1-6.

- c. Loving others **for ourselves** (for our name, position, benefit, and pride) is sin; raising up our children **for ourselves** and **for our future** is sin—Luke 14:12-14; cf. 1 Cor. 7:14.
4. The Lord uses our failures to show us how horrible, ugly, and abominable we are, causing us to forsake all that is from the self and **to completely depend on God**—Psa. 51; Luke 22:31-32; Rom. 8:28.

Day 6

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 2:1 - *My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.*

- E. To take Christ as the reality of the **trespass offering** is to experience Him as the redeeming One, the shining One, and the reigning One in order to enjoy Him as the **supply of life in the fellowship of life**—1 John 1:1—2:2; Rev. 21:21, 23; 22:1-2:
1. In taking Christ as our trespass offering, we need to make a **thorough confession** of all our sins and impurity to have a good and pure conscience—Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14; 10:22.
 2. If we confess our sins, **God is faithful** in His word to forgive us our sins and righteous in His redemption to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; furthermore, Christ as our elder Brother is our Advocate with the Father to restore our interrupted fellowship with the Father that we may abide in the enjoyment of the divine fellowship—1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2.
 3. The cleansing of the blood of Jesus the Son of God solves the problem of separation from God, the problem of guilt in our conscience, and the problem of accusations from Satan, thus enabling us to have a **daily life full of God's presence**—Psa. 103:1-4, 12-13; 32:1-2; Rev. 12:10-11.
 4. Taking Christ as our trespass offering with the confession of our sins in the divine light is the way to **drink Christ as the living water** for us to become the New Jerusalem—John 4:14-18.
 5. Taking Christ as our trespass offering to receive the forgiveness of sins issues in our **fearing God and loving God**—Psa. 130:4; Luke 7:47-50.

IV. As we are enjoying Christ in the divine fellowship, we continually experience a cycle in our spiritual life of four crucial things—the eternal life, the fellowship of the eternal life, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus the Son of God; such a cycle brings us onward in the growth of the divine life until we reach the maturity of life to corporately arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—1 John 1:1-9; Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:13.

Here our focus is on **maintaining the fellowship**, for there are conditions for fellowship. One condition is that we confess our sins. Another condition is to love God and love the brothers, as we see in 1 John 2:3-11. There are ten verses in 1 John 1, and we are considering the first eleven verses in chapter 2. The first two verses in chapter 1 speak of the eternal life. The next two verses, verses 3 and 4, introduce the fellowship. That is four verses. Then John spends seventeen verses on maintaining the fellowship. So, there are two verses on life, two verses on fellowship, and seventeen verses on maintaining the fellowship. This is twenty-one verses. This is because it is easy to receive life and to enter into the fellowship, but to maintain the fellowship is a different story. It takes some cooperation.

We need to understand the difference between our **relationship with God** and our **fellowship with God**. Our relationship with God is **not conditional**, and it **can never be broken**. Once we receive the Lord and are regenerated, He is our Father. We are born anew, and we can never be unborn. A child may be naughty and may say to his or her father, "I do not like you anymore." That would **interrupt the fellowship**; however, it **does not affect the relationship**. The child is still the father's child, but something has to be done to reconcile them and bring them back into fellowship. We know that our relationship with the Father is unconditional from verses like John 10:29: "No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." But we need to maintain our fellowship.

The first thing that interrupts the fellowship is **sin**. Sin has two aspects, as we see in 1 John 1:8-9. Verse 8 says, "*If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" This is referring to the **sinful nature** that we inherited from Adam through the fall. Then verse 9 says, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" **Sins** here is plural and refers to our **acts**, our **deeds**, that come out of our sinful nature. For both sin and sins we need the sin offering and the trespass offering.

In the Life-study of Leviticus Brother Lee develops this matter: "The sequence of the five offerings in Leviticus 1 through 5 is a picture of the sequence in 1 John 1" (p. 163). This is according to our personal and painful experience. We enjoy Christ as the burnt offering, the One who is absolute for God. We also enjoy Him as the meal offering, as the One with the proper humanity who is always pleasing to the Father. He is also the peace offering who brings us into peace with God and man. How wonderful to be in His presence! But God also is light, and as soon as we come to the light, we realize that we are enjoying the Lord but also that we have not changed. We are not only sin; we are a totality of sin. We are just sin itself. When we see this, it is painful. The Lord allows situations in our lives to expose us, to show us what we really are. This is a mercy. **We thus need Christ as both the sin and trespass offerings.** (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 7, chapter 35*)