

**Excerpts from Life-study of First John,
Message 14**

**CONDITIONS OF THE
DIVINE FELLOWSHIP (6)**

Bible Verses:

- 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;**
- 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world.**

We who believe in Christ have been born of God and have become God's children. God is now our Father, and we are His children. Because we have been born of God, we have His life. God's life is divine, eternal, and indestructible. This life is the basic factor of the spiritual inheritance we have in God's salvation.

We may use our human life as an illustration. As human beings, through birth we have our natural life,

our human life, as our basic inheritance. Any particular thing we inherit depends on our human life. When a person dies and thereby loses his human life, that is the termination of everything. He no longer has an inheritance. In the same principle, the divine life we have received through regeneration is our basic inheritance in God's salvation. Life, therefore, is crucial. The basic element of our spiritual inheritance is the divine life.

We thank the Lord that we have the divine life and that this life moves, works, and acts in us. The moving of the divine life within us issues in fellowship. Hence, fellowship is the issue of the marvelous divine life we have received. In this fellowship we enjoy God, we enjoy the apostles, we enjoy the believers, and we enjoy the church and even the churches. All this enjoyment depends on the fellowship of the divine life, and this fellowship issues out of the divine life itself.

Although we have received the divine life and enjoy God, the apostles, the believers, and the church life in the fellowship of the divine life, we still need to be watchful concerning sin.

If our fellowship is damaged through sin, we lose the enjoyment of God. We also lose the enjoyment of the apostles, the enjoyment of the believers, and the enjoyment of the church life. In other words, once we lose the fellowship, we lose the enjoyment of our entire spiritual inheritance. As a result, in a practical way we become the same as unbelievers. Unbelievers do not have God, and they have nothing to do with the enjoyment of the apostles, the believers, and the church life.

Even though we have been regenerated and have received the divine life to become children of the Father, we still must admit two things: first, that we still have sin in our flesh; second, that it is always possible for us to commit sin. Whenever we are under the divine light in fellowship and sense that we are wrong in certain matters or with certain persons, we must immediately confess our sins to our righteous Father. Our Father is ready to forgive us. Just as a human father, who has been offended by the behavior of his child, is ready to forgive the repentant child, so our divine Father is ready to forgive us. Once we confess our sins, our Father will be the faithful and righteous

God to us. He is waiting to forgive us our sins and to wash away the stains of our offenses.

In 1:7 John says that “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here we have the blood as a provision prepared for us. According to the tense of the Greek verb in this verse, the cleansing of the blood is present and continuous.

In 2:1 John says, “My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin.” This indicates that John’s intention was that the believers would not sin. We also should have this intention. We need to pray, “O Lord, keep me from sinning. Lord, preserve me in Your presence and in Your fellowship. Lord, deliver me continuously from sin.” But no matter how much we may be on the alert concerning sin, it is always possible that we shall sin. Whenever we commit sin, we need to confess our sin to God. The provision of the blood is ready for our cleansing, and the Father is willing to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all the stains of our offenses.

After covering these matters in chapter one, John goes on in chapter two to show us that the divine provision not only includes the blood of Jesus and the

faithfulness of God, but also includes the living Person of Christ as our Advocate. As the One who shed His blood for us, this Person is now our heavenly attorney taking care of our case. He is qualified for this because He is the righteous One, the One who is right with the Father.

In 2:2 John says that the One who is our Advocate with the Father is also a propitiation concerning our sins. Whenever God's children offend the Father, the fellowship between them is broken. Furthermore, there is no peace; instead there is turmoil. Realizing the situation, the children should make confession to the Father, who is ready to forgive them and cleanse them. The cleansing blood has been provided, and the Father Himself is faithful to forgive and righteous to cleanse. But how can the peace between the Father and His children be restored? We may think that as long as there is forgiveness and cleansing, peace will come automatically. However, there is still the need for our Advocate to be our propitiation between the Father and us so that the Father may be appeased and that peace may be restored.

Let us once again use our human family life as an illustration. Often the mother in a family will be the one who appeases the father in behalf of the children. Suppose the children in a particular family offend the father, peace is lost, and now there is turmoil in that family. The children repent and confess their wrongdoings to the father, and he forgives them. However, the situation between the children and the father is still not altogether pleasant. At such a time, a wise mother will speak both to the children and to the father. On the one hand, she may say to the children, “Children, it is all right now. Your father has forgiven you.” On the other hand, she may turn to her husband and say, “Isn’t it wonderful that the children have repented and have confessed to you.” As a result, the peace between the father and the children is restored through the mother’s being the propitiation, the peacemaker.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <http://online.recoveryversion.bible/>

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary:]

Introduction

[MM:] 1 John 2:2 says that “Christ Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world”. However, this propitiation is conditioned upon our receiving it by believing in the Lord. Otherwise, everyone in the world would be saved. This is Mark Miller with Bob Danker, we’re going to talk about the conditions of the divine fellowship today. Bob, thanks for joining me for this program.

[BD:] It’s good to be with you again, Matt.

[MM:] Bob, today is the sixth program we’ve been talking about the conditions of the divine fellowship. And I think we have a real treat today for our listeners. I’m looking forward to it. Can you give us a little review of bringing us up-to-date in our life-study of 1 John on the importance of this fellowship and the conditions to remain in it.

[BD:] Yes, Matt. This book, of course, begins in chapter 1 with the Apostle John, telling the believers how Christ as the eternal Life was manifested by being incarnated. And how the Apostles, who were with Him at that time — they saw Him with their eyes, they heard Him with their ears, and they even handled Him with their hands. And so this incarnated Word, who is the eternal Life, who is Christ, became in a solid form that could be seen, heard, and handled. And then the Apostles reported this eternal life, or this Person who is the eternal life, to the believers. And they received this Person. That means they received the eternal life through the Apostles’ preaching of the gospel. And this life that they received brought them into something wonderful called, “fellowship”. And fellowship is the joint enjoyment, or to enjoy together the eternal life, with the Apostles, and with the Father and the Son. So, this fellowship brings all the believers into the enjoyment of the divine life. And this fellowship is experienced by us as the flowing of the divine life within us. So, it’s through the fellowship of life that we enjoy the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Apostles, all the believers, we enjoy the riches of the divine life through its fellowship.

But John, in writing this Epistle, he realizes that our entire Christian life depends on this fellowship. If we lose this fellowship, or if this fellowship is broken or interrupted, then our Christian life is damaged, and all the benefits of the divine life are lost by us. So John was concerned that the believers would know how to maintain this precious fellowship which they have. And the first thing, he warned them about the matter of sin. Sin is terrible in that it damages and interrupts our fellowship with God and with our fellow believers. Whenever we sin, the fellowship is interrupted. So, John wanted us to be on the alert or to be warned concerning this terrible matter of sin.

But then he also wanted to show us that God has made certain provisions that we can appropriate by faith to deal with and to solve the problem of sin. We still have sin in our nature. We should never be deceived to think that as believers in Christ we no longer have sin. We do have sin. And John is very strong to point this out. But he does say, if we sin, if we do commit sins occasionally, not habitually, and then we confess them, our Father is willing and He is faithful and righteous to forgive them. And that forgiveness, followed by a cleansing, this is 1 John chapter 1 verse 7 and verse 9 — talks about cleansing, that means the washing away of all the stain of our unrighteousness — this is what maintains us in the fellowship of life. This restores the broken fellowship. So, this

is a marvelous provision that God has given us, and we're gonna see more of that provision in this particular message.

[MM:] Well, that's a good lead into Witness Lee's first section today, Bob. Because he's gonna really get into this matter of fellowship and how our inheritance as believers is really to enjoy the divine fellowship with all the elements that you mentioned — with God, Christ, the Spirit, the Apostles, otherwise how can we enjoy the ministry, the Epistles, all the believers — there's so much that we can enjoy yet that's cut off when we are affected by this thing called sin. And yet the Apostle John gives us a provision in Chapter 1, how to take care of it. Let's go to Witness Lee and get more into this matter. We'll come back and have more fellowship after that.

Part 1

[MM:] Bob, this is an important place to stop, because everything in our Christian life depends on this fellowship and enjoyment of the divine life. Yet sin comes in to damage this enjoyment and to take away this fellowship. It just seems so clear what Satan's strategy is and it also seems clear what God's provision is.

[BD:] Yes, Matt. I thought this was very enlightening where Witness Lee said that we as the children of God who had been born of Him and have received His divine, eternal life, we have an inheritance. If we are the son of a wealthy, human father, we have a certain kind of physical inheritance. And that depends upon our human life. If we lose our human life, we lose our inheritance, right? We can enjoy nothing. But as children of God, we have God's divine life. And this life is our inheritance. As long as we have the divine life, we enjoy an eternal inheritance. And that inheritance is so rich and so marvelous.

But the enjoyment of that inheritance depends on something called 'fellowship'. When we're in the fellowship of the divine life, we have the enjoyment of the inheritance of the divine life. And as Witness Lee pointed out, this enjoyment, this inheritance includes God Himself, and all that He is, all the riches of His life and nature, becomes our inheritance. It also includes the Apostles, because in this book, it's the Apostles who bring us into the fellowship of life. Then it includes all the believers. We have fellowship with all the believers and in this fellowship, we enjoy the eternal life as our inheritance. And it also includes the church. So when sin comes into our life, to break and interrupt this fellowship, we lose everything. We lose the enjoyment of the divine life. We don't lose the divine life itself. We retain the life, but we lose the enjoyment of the life. And that is the most important thing for our Christian life that we need to maintain, it's the enjoyment of the eternal life which we received from God through our divine birth. Nothing is more important to us than the fellowship. When that fellowship is broken, we are in real trouble. We are suffering a great loss. So we need a way to restore this fellowship, to maintain this fellowship, so that we can continue in the enjoyment of our divine inheritance.

[MM:] And I would have to say, Hallelujah! God has provided that way.

[BD:] He certainly has, Matt.

[MM:] Let's read 1 John 2:1 and then go on to another portion here with Witness Lee, "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." Here's Witness Lee.

Part 2

[MM:] Well, Bob, I like this picture. I'm really touched by Witness Lee's prayer, expressing a desire to the Lord not to sin, yet even though we have the intention not to sin, we still stumble, then we have the Lord's precious blood. Obviously, the Apostle John is writing this so we wouldn't sin. But the fact is, as Witness Lee said, it's very, very possible that we will sin.

[BD:] Yes, absolutely, Matt. John's intention in writing here is, as you said, that we would not sin, because John knows that if we do sin, the fellowship of the divine life would be interrupted, and that is a serious situation. So, John's hope is, and our hope is, and our prayer is, "Lord, keep me from sinning". That means, "Keep me from offending You so that I would lose the fellowship of life." But, because we still have sin in our nature, it's very possible that we will sin. And as we walk in the fellowship of life, and we walk in the shining of the divine light, we see, spontaneously, our sins, defects, wrongdoings, failures, mistakes, and etc. which are many. So what should we do when we realize that we have sinned or we have done something that offends the Lord? The only thing we can do is to confess that sin or that mistake or that wrongdoing to the Lord. Then, God has a marvelous provision to take care of this sin that we committed.

First of all, He Himself is our loving Father, so willing in His heart to forgive us. And then there's the blood of Jesus, His Son, which was shed on the cross to wash away the stain of our sins and to provide the basis, the righteous standing, so that our loving Father can forgive us righteously. So our Father is willing, the blood is there as a provision, and as soon as we confess, 1 John 1:9 says, "God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This is a marvelous, divine provision. And as soon as we confess, we have the inward sense that the fellowship of life is restored. We are forgiven. We are cleansed. And the enjoyment continues.

[MM:] Bob, this is wonderful. And I hope every listener, wherever they are right now would enter into this provision and stop, confess whatever sin is keeping them from the fellowship with the Lord, from enjoying the provision, the inheritance.. there's so much in the Christian life... you know, there's something keeping you from that, stop right now, just confess it to the Lord, and as Bob said, He's faithful and He's righteous to forgive you and to cleanse you. We've got one more very important point to cover in this Life-Study program, so let's go on. It's in verse 2, and verse 2 says, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Here's Witness Lee for the conclusion of today's Life-Study.

Part 3

[MM:] What a great and peaceful conclusion to the program today. Bob, we have to develop this matter of propitiation. Because in the last program with Ron Kangas, he referred to this matter of propitiation, and you could tell he wanted to get into it but he deferred to today's program. So, we have to develop this a little bit. So in the last few moments of our program, why don't you give our listeners an affirmation of this propitiation that we just heard about, and hopefully could usher some of our listeners right now into this very peace that the Apostle John talked about and Witness Lee is reiterating.

[BD:] Yes, Matt, it's a marvelous thing that John wrote concerning Christ as, first of all, as the Advocate, like an attorney, or one who comforts us, or bears or takes up our case in front of our Father. Then in verse 2 he says that Christ, this very Christ who's our Advocate, is the propitiation for our sins. And propitiation here in this verse refers to a sacrifice that makes propitiation. So Christ offered Himself to God as a propitiation sacrifice when He died on the cross. And the function of this propitiation, or this sacrifice, is not only to shed the blood that washes away our sins, but also to fulfill all the demands of our loving yet righteous Father so that the situation of turmoil that exists between us and our Father whenever we sin... we sense there's a lack of peace, right? We lose the peace, and our Father is bothered, He's troubled by our sinning, and we're troubled by the fact that we've sinned. So there's no peace.... So this propitiation, which is Christ as our sacrifice for propitiation, comes in to satisfy all the demands of our righteous Father, and to appease this whole situation, to give us not only a cleansing, but to restore the lost peace. And once this peace is restored, then our fellowship, our enjoyment of our divine inheritance in the divine life, is restored immediately. This is a marvelous thing. How thorough God is to provide so many things for us, to take care of our sin and to restore our lost fellowship with Him — it's truly a marvelous thing. And I really appreciate the ministry of Brother Lee here in pointing out all these wonderful items to us.

[MM:] You know, Bob, the matter of propitiation is much deeper than we can cover in this program. There's a footnote referring back into Romans 3:25, referring back to Exodus with the ark... We just can't get into it because

our time is up. But I would encourage our listeners to look at the recovery version, if they have one. If they don't, go to the recovery version online at ism.org, there's links to the recovery version. You can read it online with the footnotes, there's a lot there. Bob, we're out of time, thanks for coming in today.

[BD:] It's a pleasure, Matt.

[MM:] And thank you for joining us. We really hope that you can experience this word 'propitiation', and it's not just a new word to you, but it's really something that has brought you peace with God today.