

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John, Message 16

**CONDITIONS OF THE
DIVINE FELLOWSHIP (8)**

Bible Verses:

1 John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.

In 2:5 John says, “Whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him.” The words in this in the last sentence refer to the matter of keeping the Lord’s word and having the love of God perfected in us. The phrase in Him refers to our being in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is

a strong expression, for it emphasizes the fact that we are one with the Lord.

We need to know God experientially in a way that affects our daily living. Others may wonder why you do not participate in certain forms of worldly entertainment. The reason that you do not participate should be that you know God, that you know Him in His holy nature. Because God's holy nature does not allow you to participate in that form of entertainment, you refrain from doing so. Likewise, if we know God in His nature, this will affect the way we do our shopping. Knowing God in this way will also cause us to be sincere in relation to others. Because we know the Lord in His nature of sincerity, we would not be political. Therefore, the reason we behave ourselves and have our being in a particular way should not be merely that we follow the outward teachings of the Bible but even the more that we know God's nature and character and live according to what God is.

Sometimes others may try to convince you that there is no need for you to be so strict in your living. They may tell you, for example, that there is nothing wrong with spending some time engaging in a certain kind of amusement. You may wish to answer them by saying, “I do not view this as a matter of right or wrong. My testimony is that I know my God. I have a living God dwelling within me, and I am in Him and one with Him organically. This means that His nature becomes mine and what He is becomes my constituent. As a result, I know Him subjectively and experientially. This is the reason I cannot conduct myself in the same way others do. Unbelievers do not have Him, and, of course, they do not know Him or experience Him. Do you know why I behave in the way I do? It is because I have Him, know Him, and enjoy Him. The Lord is not only my life—He is everything to me. I do not live according to certain regulations or requirements. This is a matter of the divine life within me. The Lord dwells in me, and I know Him experientially.”

Every kind of life has its particular nature. With the nature of the divine life there is a certain taste. Because we have the Lord as our life and because we enjoy His nature, we also have the taste that comes with the divine nature. However, anyone who does not have the divine nature cannot have the divine taste. But because we have the taste of the divine nature, we simply cannot do certain things.

As an illustration of what we mean by the taste of the divine nature, we may consider what happens when something with a bitter taste is placed in the mouth of a baby. There is no need to teach the young one not to eat something bitter. As soon as a bitter-tasting substance is placed in a baby's mouth, he will spit it out.

Because we know our God in this way, we cannot speak certain things, do certain things, or go certain places. Others may even defame us and falsely accuse us. However, because we know God subjectively, often we will not have any desire to

vindicate ourselves or argue in our own defense. No matter what others may say, we know that we have the divine life. We have God within us as our life and nature. Eventually, this indwelling One will be expressed in our character and conduct. It is in this way that we know God experientially, and this knowing is a strong sign that we are in Him and one with Him.

In our behavior and way of speaking, we should bear a sign that we are in God. We should not talk with others the same way that unbelievers do. If your husband or wife, your children, your neighbors, and your classmates or co-workers cannot see a sign that you behave yourself according to the experience of God, then there is a question whether you are truly in God or not. We thank the Lord that those in the Lord's recovery do have the testimony in their daily life that they are in God. We bear a sign that we are in God, even though at times we are weak and fail Him. We thank the Lord that we have some evidence, some sign, in our daily walk that we are in God. This sign

is an indication that we know the Lord experientially. Because we know Him experientially, spontaneously we keep His commandments.

In 2:6 John goes on to say, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.” To be in Christ is the beginning of the Christian life. Our being put in Christ was God’s doing once for all (1 Cor. 1:30). To abide in Christ is the continuation of the Christian life. This is our responsibility in our daily walk, a walk that is a copy of Christ’s walk on earth. To abide in Him is actually to have fellowship with Him. On the negative side, this requires that we deal with our sins; on the positive side, this requires that we keep His word.

When we are abiding in the Lord, having fellowship with Him, our abiding in Him spontaneously issues in love for God and for the brothers. Therefore, the second condition, the

second requirement, of fellowship is that we love God and the brothers.

It should not be with our natural love that we love God and His children. On the contrary, our natural love needs to be put on the cross. We should love God and His children with the divine love, the love that is conveyed to us through the word of the Lord and that becomes our experience and enjoyment.

God wants us to love Him with His love. He also wants us to love His children, and even the whole world, with His love. First, we need to enjoy God's love and experience His love to such an extent that it fills us, saturates us, and becomes our very essence, causing us to be permeated with the love of God. Then with this love we will love God, we will love God's children, and we will love all people. We do not love them with our natural love; we love them with the love of God that we have experienced and enjoyed. Praise the Lord for such

a wonderful love! This is the love revealed in the first Epistle of John.

One difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended. When we love others, we become involved with them. For this reason it is often the case that those we love in a natural way eventually become our enemies. Because natural love may have such a result, those who are wise in a human way are slow and careful in loving others. They realize that if you love others in a foolish way, sooner or later that love will cause trouble. Many divorces and separations are the result of a foolish natural love that is easily offended and leads to enmity. For example, a certain man and woman may know each other only for a short time. In a quick way they get married. Then after only a little time has gone by, they may separate or get a divorce. At first, they loved each other, but not too long after they were married, they became enemies. This is the result of loving each other in a natural

way. If they had never loved one another in a natural way, they would not have become enemies.

The point I am making here is that we need to be careful not to love others by our natural love. Rather, our natural love should be put on the cross. We need to love others by the love of God that we have experienced and enjoyed. If we experience God's love, we will love God with this love. We will also love the brothers with this same love. This kind of love does not cause trouble. May we all see that we need to love God and others with the divine love that has become our experience and enjoyment.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <https://text.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]: Do you have a sign that you are in God, and that you know God experientially in your daily life? Well, the aged Apostle John talked about such a sign in his first epistle, and that's what we're discussing in today's life study radio program. So stay with us to find the sign and whether you have the sign. This is Matt Miller with Bill Lawson to come back to the word of God to fellowship about how the love of God can become our love. Bill, thanks for joining me today for this program on the love of God.

[BL]: I'm glad to be back, Matt. I think, this really will be an excellent view of First John. We've been in First John, as you mentioned, quite a while, and we'll get into some matters concerning more conditions of the divine fellowship. How we as believers can remain faithfully in the divine fellowship.

[MM]: I think you talked with me earlier, Bill, about the first condition of the divine fellowship, was the matter of confessing sins. Well, now we've come to the seventh program on the conditions of the divine fellowship, and we are just now getting to the second one, the second condition, which is to love the brothers. Up to now, we've just been talking about the first condition, the confessing of sins. Would you please give our listeners an idea of what we're for?

[BL]: This program today, Matt, will not so much concentrate on the negative side of how we remain in the divine fellowship by the confessing of our sins. Of course, there is that side we always have to maintain a clear fellowship with the Lord, and we do that by daily and constantly confessing our sins. But that's just merely on the negative side. Today we're going to look at it from the positive point of view, that another very excellent way for us to remain in the divine fellowship is to love God and to love the brothers by abiding in the Lord's word. So we'll get into that today, and hopefully we can see something on the positive side of how by loving God with the divine love and also loving the brothers with the divine love, we can remain and stay fully in the divine fellowship.

[MM]: Bill, let's go on and read a couple verses. I'm going to read First John, chapter two, verses three through six. *"And in this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in this one; But whoever keeps His word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. In this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked."* Let's go to Witness Lee for today's life study.

Part 1

[MM]: Well, Bill, we're coming to the sign that I referred to at the beginning of the program, the sign that we have God in our daily life, a proof, so to speak, a confirmation, and I believe in the heart of every Christian, they would say, even though they're struggling and they might not feel like there's a sign, they can point to a time in their life where there was a sign. There always is a sign in every believer who's genuinely born again. There is a sign, isn't it?

[BL]: That's really so. Brother Lee, is talking about a sign. He's not talking about a miraculous sign or some kind of objective sign. He's talking about a kind of Christian conduct, Matt, that we believers should manifest as a proof that we are in the Lord. You know, Paul in First Corinthians, chapter one, verse 30, he says, *"But of God you are in Christ Jesus."* So, when we believed in the Lord and were regenerated, God put us into Christ positionally. We got out of Adam, and he put us into Christ, but now we need a daily Christian walk that by our subjective experiences that we need a proof, a kind of sign that we are in Him, and this sign is something that we need to eventually really get into, is a kind of a living. You might say even a Christian lifestyle that believers have, that they can't do the same thing as the unbelievers do, even when we're dealing with our wife, when we're dealing with our children, the way we dress, what we wear, the way we handle our children, and all of these matters, these can be signs, Matt, in our Christian life that we are truly in Him. And it's a manifestation of a life lived out of us by our enjoyment and experience of Christ, that others can see in a Christian's life that person is different. We're not weird, we're not strange, but we are definitely different, and that difference has an outward manifestation in our daily Christian life.

[MM]: Bill, Witness Lee gave the example of a child, when you put something bitter in his mouth, the nature, the life of that child rejects it and spits it up. How does that apply to what we're talking about here?

[BL]: Well, in everything, after we become a believer, we now have a divine life and a divine taste that has been put into us, and as we live the Christian life, and we cooperate with that divine taste and that divine life, that life just lives a certain way. It drives a car in a way that's different from unbelievers. So this kind of experiences that we have day by day, where we have particular kind of life that we live, we can't do things that the unbelievers do, we can't go where they go, the life within just protests and doesn't allow us to do certain things, but it gives us a strong sense that we are doing the proper things according to God. These are signs, man. They're like subjective signs, like a sense, a kind of a taste within us. And when we cooperate with that in our living, in our speaking, in our walking, in our talking, in our whole daily life, this is a real manifestation that we know God subjectively and experientially.

[MM]: Well, we don't want our listeners to get introspective about this, looking for these kind of signs, but we do believe it is a fact that there will be this kind of response in every believer of the Lord. Bill, let's go on now with the life study and get into this matter of the love of God in verse five.

Part 2

[MM]: Well, Bill, we finally come to this matter of the love of God, which is the second condition we've been referring to, and we spend a lot of time on the first condition, confessing the sins. Why don't you go on and develop this positive condition?

[BL]: Right, Matt, this matter, of course, of this other condition of loving God and loving the brothers, even loving others who are not regenerated yet. On the positive side, I think we all realize it's very clear in First John that to abide in Him practically is not merely just to be in Him passively. Usually when we say abide, we think of remain in Him, stay in Him, but it doesn't just mean to stay and remain there, not doing anything. No. It's a very active abiding, that means we are one with the Lord, one spirit with Him, seeking His fellowship, looking to the Lord, how to remain and be one with Him. But here we have to realize that the word of God is very important to enable us to abide in Him. So, practically speaking here the apostle John brings out the matter of the commandments, keeping the commandments, abiding in the Lord, and so on. In other words, the word of God, when we read the word, we pray over the word, this word of God conveys the riches of God, it conveys the love of God, and it also ministers to us the divine supply to enable us to love God and love the brothers. I think it's very difficult. I think we realize for us to just say someone needs to love God, we say with what, but when we stay in His word, we pray over His word, we read His word, we study His word, then this supplies us with a divine life, and this, the word conveys a divine element into us, enabling us to love God and to love the brothers.

[MM]: Bill, you've really hit the point, I think, and we prayed before the program today that the Lord would bring in some light, some inspiration, and I feel this is a real point to me of inspiration and enlightenment, because what happens here is we're focusing on the supply, we're not just telling people they need to love God. People know they need to love God, and they know they need to love the brothers. But what you just said, and what we're gonna get into in this next section with Witness Lee, the conclusion, is that there's a supply. When we enjoy the word, we get infused with an element of God. This gives us the ability to love. I guess the question is, is the love God referred to in verse five? Is that our love or God's love? Well, anyway, it's the love of God. And first, it has to be something that we enjoy. Let's go on to Witness Lee as we come to the conclusion of today's life-study.

Part 3

[MM]: Bill, I really think we're touching something here that's quite deep and profound, yet simple. It's a simple word that I really hope our listeners can grasp as we touch it. I want you to talk about the distinction between our natural love and God's love.

[BL]: There is a lot of light here, Matt. I think we all agree, and there's a lot of revelation here, because we think that our love is okay. We think we can love people, we can love God with our own love, but according to Brother Lee's ministry and word here, we don't have that kind of love. What we have is a natural love, and I'm glad Brother Lee used this word, natural, because you know when God created man, we do have some kind of a natural virtue. We want to be right, we want to be loving, we want to be holy, we want to be separated from things, but this is just the natural love that we receive from the first creation. But what First John and what Brother Lee are talking about here is a divine love. It's not the natural love. There is a

real distinction here. Our natural love just runs out, and we know that if any of us have been married for any period of time, we realize when we're first married, we seem like we love our wife and everything, there's no problem, but then as the years go on, it seemed like we run out. So that just shows us clearly that we, our natural love just runs out, not only runs out, but it seems like that natural love can turn into enmity, and we can almost hate one another, the very ones that we love. One minute we don't like them, the next minute showing that this is not the divine love.

In the Greek language, there are three words for love. First, we know Eros is the physical, but mainly we want to talk about phileo, which is a Greek word, which is the intimate love the kind of platonic love, but even deeper than that, Matt, there's a Greek word, agape, a-g-a-p-e, and that is the nobler divine love of God, and that's the love that the apostle John is talking about. When we love one another with the love of God, then we can love God with that love, the divine love, and we can love others with the divine love. So, what we need is a divine love infused into us, ministered to us. Then it's not our natural love. Our natural love needs to go to the cross, that's, I think, very clear. But the divine love needs to be enjoyed and experienced by us, then we can love God with the divine agape love, and we can love others with the divine agape love, and in that situation, there's no leaven, there's no enmity, there's no natural likes or dislike, but we are really in the love of God.

[MM]: Bill, I want to read a paragraph from the life-study of First John. It's on page 141 Witness Lee says, "If we experience the love of God, we shall have the deep realization that our natural love is one thing, and that the love of God, which becomes our love through experience, is something very different. One difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended, and I think you referred to this when you said that one thing with our natural love is it can run out, and it's a real test that when our love for someone, if it can turn into an offense, we have to question, was that really the divine love, or was that my natural love?"

[BL]: That's exactly right, Matt.

[MM]: It's like a warning sign to us. It's like the signal lights in your car dashboard when a red light comes on. When we have an offense, was that my natural love? Sometimes it's hard to know. Is this my love? Is this God's love? Who's loving here? But when there's something that rises up in us and becomes offended, we have to turn, we have to humble ourselves and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, turn me back to experience You, to enjoy You." And have this experience that you experience receiving the Lord's love, so you know it's something very different than the love that's a natural love.

[BL]: Right, Matt, in that way, it's not us trying to love God and trying to love others with our natural love that runs out and is easily offended. It's through the word of God, as Brother Lee have shared, and by the supply from the word and the ministry of the word that brings the agape divine love into us. Then we can love God and we can love others with the divine love.

[MM]: So we enjoy the love of God. The love of God becomes our enjoyment, and the result of that is we can love others with the love of God. It is the outflow of our enjoyment of the love of God, right?

[BL]: And this keeps us in the divine fellowship on the positive side.

[MM]: Bill, it's been really nice having you. I hope you'll come back and do another program with me soon.

[BL]: It's a real pleasure, Matt. Thanks very much.