

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John,

Message 17

**CONDITIONS OF THE
DIVINE FELLOWSHIP (9)**

Bible Verses:

1 John 2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard.

8 Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

9 He who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

**10 He who loves his brother abides
in the light, and there is no cause
of stumbling in him.**

THE OLD COMMANDMENT BECOMING NEW

Many who read verses 7 and 8 are bothered by what John says concerning an old commandment and a new commandment. In verse 7 he says that he is not writing a new commandment but an old commandment. But in verse 8 he says that he is writing a new commandment. How can an old commandment be a new commandment? Is the new commandment a commandment other than the old commandment, or is it the old commandment becoming new? If we read these verses carefully in context, we will see that actually the old commandment and the new commandment are one. The reason for this is that the commandment is the word of the Lord, and the word of the Lord dawns as a new day dawns when the sun rises in the morning. When the sun rises, the shining of the sun swallows up the darkness. The darkness of night always

vanishes with the shining of the morning sun. Here John indicates that the Lord's commandment, as His living word, shines as the dawning sun, and this shining swallows up darkness.

After any kind of human commandment has been given, it gradually becomes old. Human commandments are not living. Because these commandments are not living, they never dawn and they never shine. But the commandment given by the Lord is His living word. Because His commandment is His living word, this word shines. When this living word dawns in the darkness, it dawns with heavenly light. The shining of heavenly light makes old things new. In particular, it makes the old commandment new, fresh, and full of light.

Because human words are dead, they cannot shine and therefore cannot give us a new beginning. But the Lord's commandment, as His living word, always gives us a new beginning because His word shines anew and afresh again and again.

Many of us can testify that we have experienced the shining of the Lord's word in

this way. For instance, in John 13:34 the Lord Jesus commanded us to love one another. We can testify that many times this commandment has become new and fresh in our Christian life. Throughout the years that we have been Christians, often this old injunction has become a fresh word to us. Whenever we contact the Lord and His old commandment dawns in our darkness, light shines. With this light there is newness. This is how the old commandment can be a new commandment. The old commandment becomes new because it is a word that is living and shining. This shining makes the old commandment new and fresh.

Now we can understand why the apostle John says, “I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment...Yet again a new commandment I am writing to you.” In these verses John seems to be saying, “I believe that what I am writing to you is shining upon you and swallowing the darkness. The darkness is now vanishing, passing away, in the shining of this new light.”

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

In verse 9 John continues, “He who says he

is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.” In chapter 1 of this Epistle, John speaks about light and darkness with respect to the first condition of the divine fellowship. When in chapter 2 he speaks regarding the second condition, he also mentions light and darkness. Hatred is a sign that we are in darkness, whereas love is a sign that we are in the light.

Both conditions of the divine fellowship depend on the divine light. If we are not in the divine light, we are automatically through with the fellowship of the divine life. Whenever we are without light, we are automatically in darkness. Whenever light vanishes, darkness is present. Likewise, as long as we abide in the divine light, darkness vanishes.

The absence of the divine light is a strong sign that we are not in the divine fellowship. In chapter 1, concerning the first condition of the divine fellowship, whether we are in light or darkness is determined by whether or not we deal with sin. If we sin, we are in darkness. But if we deal with sin by confessing it and experiencing God’s forgiveness and cleansing, we will be in the

light. In chapter 2, concerning the second condition of the divine fellowship, whether we are in darkness or light is determined by whether or not we love the brothers. If we hate, we are in darkness. But if we love, we are in the light. When we are in the light, we are then in the divine fellowship. But when we are in darkness, we have nothing to do with this fellowship.

In verse 11 John says, “But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” In John 12:35 and 40 darkness is the issue of blinding; here it is the cause of blinding. Darkness brings in blindness, and blindness is the cause of stumbling. How is it possible for a Christian to be stumbled? A Christian may be stumbled by the blindness that comes from darkness. Darkness is the result of an interruption in our fellowship. Whenever our fellowship in the divine life is broken, immediately we are in darkness. This darkness causes blindness. Then it is easy for us to stumble.

MAINTAINING THE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP BY FULFILLING

THE TWO CONDITIONS

In 1 John 1:5—2:11 we have the conditions of the divine fellowship. The first condition is the confessing of our sins, and the second condition is loving God and the brothers. Whenever we sin, we need to confess our sin. Our confession is based on God's provisions: the blood of Jesus, the faithfulness and righteousness of our faithful and righteous God, the Advocate, and Christ as our propitiation. Through these provisions we may enjoy the restoration of our fellowship. We then have two-way traffic for a mutual enjoyment between us and God. This is the first condition for maintaining the divine fellowship.

We have emphasized the fact that the second condition is loving God and the brothers. In order to fulfill this condition, we need to know God continuously and experientially. It is not sufficient to know God once in a while, and we do not know Him once for all. We need to know Him experientially by continuously living in the divine life. Our daily life should be a life of knowing God constantly, for our life should be a life of living God. As long as we live God, we will constantly know Him.

I can testify from experience that whenever I speak, I have the opportunity to know God. In giving a message my desire is to speak in God and with God. Sometimes, however, a certain word may be about to come out of my mouth. Then I realize that I need to swallow it, for the very God in whom and with whom I speak regulates what I say. I do not want to speak in myself but in God. I cannot tell you how much I have come to know God in the matter of my speaking. Whenever I speak, I know God. Speaking is always a golden opportunity for me to experience Him.

If we would experience and enjoy the divine love and have it become the love by which we love God and others, we need to know God experientially. This is the basic requirement for having the love of God become our love.

If we continually know God in an experiential way, we will automatically keep the commandments of the Lord. When we know God, we keep the Lord's commandment. To keep the Lord's commandment means that we take His word. Whenever we receive the Lord's word and put it into practice, immediately we have the life supply within us. His life supply

backs up His commandment. His commandment is not merely an injunction requiring us to do something; it is also a word that always supplies whatever it demands. The Lord's word even supplies us with the Lord Himself as life and as the Spirit. Therefore, we may experience Him and enjoy Him. If we know Him, we will keep His word. By keeping His word we enjoy His supply.

The two conditions of the divine fellowship involve sin on the negative side and love on the positive side. On the negative side, we need to deal with sin; on the positive side, we need to exercise ourselves to love God and the brothers. Therefore, sin must be dealt with, and love must be perfected. If we deal with sin and exercise ourselves to love God and the brothers, we will fulfill the conditions of keeping ourselves in the fellowship of the divine life.

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]: The two conditions of the divine fellowship involve sin on the negative side and love on the positive side. On the negative side we need to deal with sin, on the positive side we need to exercise ourselves to love God and love the brothers. Therefore sin must be dealt with and love must be perfected. If we deal with sin and exercise ourselves to love God and the brothers, we shall fulfill the conditions of keeping ourselves in the fellowship of the divine life. This is Matt Miller with John Pester for another life-study message from 1 John on the conditions of the divine fellowship. John, welcome back to the life-study program.

[JP]: Matt, it's good to be here.

[MM]: John, today's program is the eighth one that we have done on the conditions of the divine fellowship. Many programs have been on the negative side of dealing with sins, but in our last few programs the last few days we started talking about the positive side of loving God and the brothers. So before we get into the program, why don't we do a little review and give our listeners a brief word before we start.

[JP]: Well, Matt, I really appreciate the focus of this book. It takes the believers completely out of the realm of doctrine and knowledge and brings them into a living that is in the fellowship of the divine life. It points the way to the believers how to fulfill the conditions to remain in this life of knowing the Triune God. When we speak of knowing God, and when John speaks of knowing God in this epistle, he's not talking about knowing that God exists or even knowing that Jesus is God in a kind of doctrinal way. He's talking about knowing God in a continuous way in our daily living. And that knowing produces within us a love for God and a love for the brothers, and it establishes our walk and even perfects our walk. It brings what we have in God to its fullest expression and manifestation, which is a walk in the light and a walk that's full of love toward God and the brothers.

[MM]: John, I think this is going to be an enlightening program. Of course, we are going to be talking about the light. So I really hope our listeners will stay tuned with us, because I think they're going to find out that knowing God is, like you said, more than a mere mental thing. Knowing God is something that you can experience right now, wherever you are, in whatever experience you are in. We hope that you will find that you can know God in that.

Let me read 1 John 2:7-8. "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you heard. Yet again, a new commandment I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." Here's Witness Lee for today's life-study message number 17 from 1 John.

Part 1

[MM]: John, I like how the apostle John connects this matter of the new commandment to the darkness passing away and the true light shining. Let's take a few minutes here and talk a little bit more about this new commandment before we go on which is really just the old commandment.

[JP]: Well, I think that's the very interesting point that John raises in this epistle. And it really points to the fact that we're dealing with an epistle that is based upon the experience of the divine life. The only way that you can understand these verses is within the context of our enjoyment and fellowship in the divine life in a daily continuous way.

John says that he's not writing a new commandment—it's the old commandment that they heard of from the Lord in John 13:34—but then in the very next verse he says yet again it's a new commandment, it seems like it's a contradiction. This is one of those phrases that someone who doesn't believe in the Bible or doesn't believe in the word of God would say, "Well, there's a contradiction here. John is not being consistent." But John is absolutely being consistent according to his experience of the divine life in the fellowship of the divine life.

The Lord's word is more than just an injunction. It's more than just a commandment. It is a word that contains the divine life. "The words that I speak are spirit and life," He says in John. And the Lord's commandment brings with it a life supply. And so when the Lord speaks His word to us again, He may have spoken the word to us yesterday. But when He speaks that same word to us again today, the old commandment from yesterday becomes new in our experience. And I think we've all had these experiences where we've been in the word. The Lord has touched us in a particular way. And then maybe months, years, weeks, it doesn't matter. The Lord comes back to us and He speaks that word again. And all of a sudden, that old commandment becomes new in our experience. And when it becomes new in our experience, it's like the dawning of the light. And the light shines. And we have a new appreciation. We have a new understanding. We have a new fellowship and a deeper fellowship with the Triune God. I've had this experience many times. Even the Lord speaks the exact same word, but the emphasis in His speaking in that particular instance is different than what He spoke previously. And I get new light. And I'm brought into deeper fellowship. And it's like the dawn shines. And it's so wonderful and it's so experiential to realize that an old commandment can become a new commandment daily in our experience.

[MM]: And when that happens, we have the experience of 1 John 2:8, which says, "The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." And so I hope right now, John, wherever the listeners are listening to this, whether it's on the internet, in a car, wherever it is, I hope there could be some darkness passing away and some true light shining. Like you said, the dawning of a new day.

[JP]: This is the big difference between the word of God and the word of man. The word of man, when it's given, it just becomes old. But the word of God is living and operative and it can become new in our experience every day.

[MM]: Well, I feel like there's a lot there and we could linger on this point more, but we better go on. Let's go on to verses 9 through 11. And I'll read those verses. "He who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him; but he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. There's a lot of key words here. We're going to go back to Witness Lee and then come back for more fellowship.

Part 2

[MM]: John, I hate to admit it, but we surely have had this experience in the past. Too much of it. When light is gone, it is a strong sign that we are not in the divine fellowship. So then blindness comes in. And then, as a result of that, darkness. And it is from the broken fellowship with the Lord, which is really what He wants us. He wants us to be in fellowship with Him in the light. Yet, we become spiritually blind, and then it is easy to stumble. What a picture!

[JP]: You know, what is interesting about the first epistle of John is that it is so simple. It brings us into the realization that we need to have a continuous fellowship in the divine life. And it also shows us the two realms that a Christian believer can be in. There are only two realms that a Christian believer can be in. He is either in the realm of the divine light in fellowship with the Triune God or he is in the realm of the satanic darkness and is away from God. And the love of God is not being perfected in that believer. There is just those two realms. It is either love and light or hatred and darkness.

And we need to have the realization that we are not in fellowship with the Triune God. And this is the point that John stresses. You are not in the proper condition to be in fellowship with God if there is a hating in your heart toward your brothers. That is the sign that you are in darkness. And that darkness is a satanic darkness. And with that darkness comes blindness. Eventually, when you are in the dark, you cannot see. And when you cannot see, you stumble. Why do Christians stumble? Why do Christians backslide? Why do Christians fall out of the fellowship with the Triune God? Because they are not in the fellowship. There is hatred for the brothers. And we all have to admit this, that we have these experiences where we just do not get along with certain brothers. Sometimes we get along with a brother, but some offense comes in. And all of a sudden, that offense negates our fellowship with that brother, brings in a kind of hating. And that is a sure sign that we are not in fellowship with the Triune God.

Do not fool yourself to say that you know God and that you are in the light when there is something in your heart that you are harboring of hatred toward your brothers. This is a sure sign. Because hatred is not just an emotion. It is a realm. It is a satanic realm that you live in and you occupy. When there is hatred in our heart toward the brothers, we have to realize that we are giving place to the devil to come in and ultimately place a block of stumbling before our very self. Not others, but before ourselves. It is stumbling us from fellowshiping with the Triune God.

[MM]: And that matter of stumbling is equivalent to the matter of hating. It is like this second condition for the divine fellowship, this matter of loving God and loving the brothers. If we are going to stay in the fellowship, the enemy wants to come in and cause a problem. He is going to try to create offenses between the brothers. How do we respond to those? That is the question. What are we going to do?

[JP]: Well, you have to get into the God who is love. You have to find a way through the confession of your sins. You have to get back into the fellowship of the divine life with the Triune God who is love. And then that love begins to bubble up in your being and it displaces the darkness because that love is related to light. It displaces the darkness. It displaces the hatred. And there is a real experience of knowing God at that point as the God of love.

[MM]: Well, if you are listening to this right now and you have any kind of response in your heart that there is some hatred toward a brother, then we would ask you to open to the Lord just between you and the Lord. "Lord, shine in my heart. Scatter this darkness. Take away this evil thing from your enemy that got in me." We all need to really give the Lord the ground that he could perfect His love in us.

And as we go on to the final portion here, I want to read the beginning of this section in 1 John about

loving God and the brothers. And it starts in verse 3. We started out the program with verse 7, but we are going to go back to verse 3 and talk about knowing God. And it says, "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." Let's go to Witness Lee for the conclusion of today's life-study.

Part 3

[MM]: John, it almost seems like these two terms to remain in the divine fellowship summarize the entire Christian life. To clear up sinning and promote loving. This kind of knowing of God is different than the knowing of God you would get from going to a seminary, but it's a very experiential knowing, isn't it?

[JP]: Well, this knowing of God, like Witness Lee says, is a knowing of God in a moment-by-moment way in the course of your daily living. We have the opportunity to know God in this capacity. God can continuously speak His commandments in our being as we go through our daily living, and as we respond to those commands of the Lord in a living way, we're brought into a knowing of God, because as He speaks his commandment, we have a kind of instant sense of the living heart of our living God. We know exactly how He's feeling toward a brother. Sometimes you want to say a word toward a brother, and the Lord's commandment comes up, and it just stops the word, like Witness Lee says, at the top of your throat, and the Lord says, "Don't say that." And in our response to that command, we know God, the love of God, is expressed through us toward the brother, and we're brought into a life supply that keeps us in the fellowship of the divine life.

This is a marvelous point that God's word is living, and His living word is being spoken by the living God, and so when you receive those words, we know God. We know what God is feeling. We know what God's heart is, and that brings us further into a fellowship of the divine life. So when John is talking about knowing God, he's not talking about doctrine at all. He's talking about knowing the heart of God as it's expressed to us and through us in our daily living.

[MM]: I like the description of how he said he knows God in His speaking especially, and how the word is coming up his throat, and he swallows it right before it comes out of his mouth. This is really a moment-by-moment knowing of God. I'm afraid many times it gets out of my mouth before I know God, and then I have to confess. What a difference.

[JP]: What a difference, because that does happen. Because sometimes we think, well, that's not really the Lord speaking, and I have every right to say what I'm getting ready to say to this brother or this person. But somehow the Lord, when you respond and say, "Amen, Lord, I'll just shut my mouth and not utter that." All of a sudden we're just flooded with life. We're flooded with love. We have a deeper appreciation for the person that we were going to say that to. Even the stopping of the word based on the Lord's commandment instills within us a deeper love for that brother and a deeper knowing of God Himself. And it's wonderful.

[MM]: Well, this deeper knowing of God Himself is what the goal of our life-study program is. We hope that as you're listening, you're getting to know God in a deeper way and actually in a moment-by-moment way, as we learned today. John, we've run out of time. Thanks for coming in for this program today.

[JP]: I appreciate the opportunity. And thank you also for listening.

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