

# Fellowship With the Father and With the Son 1

## John 1

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having fellowship with God through the communication of divine life, which is made possible through Christ.*

**Scripture:** John 14:6, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 10:19-22, 1 John 1:3-9

**Topics:** "Divine Life", "Fellowship With God"

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### Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of fellowship with the Father and the Son as presented in 1 John 1, illustrating that divine life is communicated through Christ and is essential for true joy and happiness. He explains that this fellowship is rooted in the new life given to believers, which enables them to share in Christ's feelings and desires. Darby highlights the necessity of walking in the light of God's presence, acknowledging sin, and the cleansing power of Christ's blood, which allows believers to stand before God without fear. He stresses that true joy comes from recognizing Christ as eternal life and the importance of obedience that flows from this new nature. Ultimately, Darby reassures that through Christ, believers can have a genuine relationship with God, free from the burden of sin.

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### Transcript

Notes of an address on 1 John 1.\*

\*As far as ascertained, these particular notes have never been before published.

The subject of this epistle is the communication of divine life. In the gospels we have the exhibition of it in the person and character of Jesus Christ: but in the epistles we have the communication of it, as also tests of divine life. These tests are given to assure us of the possession of life, as "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

Divine life in fellowship with God exhibits sin in us, and the question arises as to how we can have fellowship with God. But of this the first four verses do not treat; they exhibit the beauty of eternal life outside of us - first as manifested in the Man Christ Jesus, and afterward as communicated through Him from God.

From the 5th verse to the end treats of fellowship with God.

Now fellowship, or communion, with God is necessary to our being happy in His presence. If we seek to walk with Christ without having fellowship with Him, we shall be miserable. We must have common feelings with Him and common objects, or we cannot be happy with Him! Impossible; less than this is worse than nothing.

How can such as we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son? By the communication of an entirely new life. Something we never had before, or could have had save by direct communication from God. Adam had it not, not any more in Eden than out of Eden. In Eden Adam was a happy, innocent, obedient creature, but he had not Christ - he did not want Him. He had Him as Creator, of course. Adam was good, no doubt; but the first Adam is not the second Adam, and never will be. The last Adam is the Son of God; He became man, and as man manifested the divine life here on earth in a way that it never could have been manifested but for sin. It could not have been displayed in heaven in this way. The light shone in darkness. Not only was not the first Adam the second Adam, but he saw no beauty in Him. The second Adam had to say, "for My love I had hatred." Man saw nothing to admire. There was not a feeling to respond to the revelation of God's grace. Blessed be God, the patience of grace was greater than sin, and it is sweet to see the unfoldings of this grace.

Divine life was adapted to our needs by being in the Man Christ Jesus. He went through all that we have to go through, "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There was no sin, of course. But in Him, the heart to which life has been communicated can see the perfection of divine life. It could not have been thus seen in heaven, although it was there with the Father long before. No angel wanted such grace; no angel demanded such patience; it was for man as a sinner that divine life was manifested. Thus we see love adapting itself to us in the person of the Man Christ Jesus. Perfection has come to meet us (I speak of those who know Christ, though all may come to Him as sinners).

The apostle says, "we have seen Him and heard Him." They heard Him every day, and what was it they saw? Eternal life. You may ask many a Christian what is eternal life, and he cannot tell you, though he has it within him. Christ is eternal life. John says, "the life was manifested, and we saw and heard"; they saw and heard Christ, and He was eternal life.

First manifested, then communicated; as is said farther on, "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." And, then, "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Our responsibility is to believe the record: Adam's was obedience. A man may be very respectable and well conducted, without having life, because whatever he may have got he has not got life, unless he has got Christ. If you have not got Christ, you have not got life (divine life, of course). If I have not got Christ, I have no life in me. Immense joy there is in the fact that the life I have is in Christ - not in myself; as Paul says, "not I, but Christ in me." Divine life was perfectly manifested in Christ: we have the treasure in earthen vessels, therefore it is exhibited feebly in us.

Now, we have to follow Christ's precepts in obedience, but that is not divine life; the communication of life, by giving us a new nature, makes it natural to us to love what Christ loves, and to do as Christ does. Obedience is necessary. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

Obedience to God is the essence of doing right, but Christ has set Himself apart as the perfect and glorified Man, to attract my heart's affections to Himself, and my desires must flow according to the new nature which He has imparted. And thus, as in ch. 2:8, that which is true in Him is true in you who believe.

Then God is holy, and I am not holy. Christ becomes my hope, and His blood cleanses me from all sin. If I receive His word, I receive Christ, and He is eternal life. Henceforth I hate sin, and the Son of God is my life. The second verse puts me into fellowship. If Christ is my life, that is fellowship. When He is in me all things are changed; He is my object; He is my life; and we have a real fellowship by nature. My walk should not be the result of obedience merely, but of the same feelings as Christ's. So the Spirit by John says, "Walk in the light," not according to the Light, which would be obedience, but in the Light, which is fellowship.

In the 4th verse we have, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." "These things," as expressed in the opening verses of the epistle, are the manifestation of divine life in the person of Christ, and the communication of divine life through Him to such as believe; and thus the detail, however real, and true, and valuable, of conflict and experience in the believer, is set aside as a source of joy.

Divine life has been manifested, divine life has been communicated, "and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." It is the fact that God in Christ has become a man, that is my life and joy. And this is fellowship with God, and blessing to saints. Is Jesus the Father's delight? Is He His Well-beloved? So is He mine; feeble no doubt my affections may be, but in measure they flow in the same direction as the thoughts of the Father. This is communion with the Father. And, then, is the Father the Son's delight, and His confidence and joy? So is He mine; and this is fellowship with the Son. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Here sin is left out; there is no question of sin here, because the new life has nothing to do, so to speak, with sin (though we have). The new life is in the last Adam; this life and this joy is the blessedness of heaven. There is no other blessedness but Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Perfect (no doubt as regards our enjoyment of it) the blessedness will not be, till we are in heaven; but there will be no change. Christ is my life and joy now, and heaven has no other life or joy. Now I have done with self, because I have got another self, who is more my real self than I. My connection with the person of Christ is new life in me.

Therefore, I am not in the flesh - the flesh is in me, and drags me back sometimes - but I might be a very decent, respectable man, and have no life - (divine life, of course, I mean). I can go to the vilest sinner in the country and offer him life. Your respectability is not life. Grace upsets that to magnify God, grace puts down man to give new life which is altogether of God. But we are responsible.

Eternal life has been manifested, and now the message to us is, that God is light, and there is no darkness in Him, so that if we say we are in fellowship with Him while we are walking in darkness (the apostle uses great plainness of speech) we lie. You wish for heaven? If you have not fellowship with God you would be more miserable in heaven than ever you can be on earth. If I talk of fellowship I must be able to stand the light of God's presence. If that light can discover a spot upon me, all is over with me. The fact is (it is a solemn fact), you are all this moment in the light of God's presence without a veil. The veil is rent. I do not say you all enjoy this. God knoweth, and my earnest desire for you all is, that you may joy in God and be happy in His presence, that He may manifest Himself to you. But whether you know it or like it, there you are; "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Measures of guilt are useless here. It is not "Have I more spots or fewer? am I better or worse? a great or a little sinner?" not this at all, but, Can I enjoy God in Himself? Am I full of joy at the manifestation and communication of His own gift - eternal life? If I cannot stand in the light I cannot see God. Under the law

God was hidden. He said, "I will dwell in the thick darkness." From thence He sent out His commandments.

But do you think the law was the manifestation of God? No, but of you. The law showed what you ought to be, it also showed what you are. The law said, "You ought to love God." You say, "Who is He, that I may love Him?" "Well, He is that Being who is up thundering and lightening upon Mount Sinai." "Oh, I cannot love Him, I am awfully afraid of Him." "What! cannot love Him? Then you have broken the law, and there remains nothing but the curse for you." This is all you can get from the law, because the law does not say that God loves man, but that man should love God. The children of Israel said, "Let not God speak to us." Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," but in the infinite grace of God the law was the schoolmaster up to Christ, who was with the Father, and who in the fulness of time was manifested in the world.

It is certain you ought to love God: they do it in heaven. Man cannot love Him, does not love Him, and so is under the curse of the law. Then God cannot allow sin. So He hid Himself. The fiery mount, the thick darkness, the veil, all had the glory of God, till at last He hid it in Christ, that He might manifest His grace and eternal life in Him. Thus the veil was rent, and man stands in the open presence of God. God was hid behind the veil: the veil is rent, and you here now are all in His presence. God reveal it to you, if you know it not; for if you are not fit for His presence, you have nothing to say to Him. I do not say that grace cannot unfold this to you. I say grace can do so. But I speak of light, the light of God's holy, immediate, unveiled presence, and if you are not spotless in that light, you have nothing to do with Him. I repeat it, you have nothing to do with Him.

Under law, my first impulse on the discovery of sin in me is to flee from God. When Israel heard the noise, and saw the light from Sinai, "they removed, and stood afar off." When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Christ, He stooped down and wrote on the ground, having said that anyone who was without sin might cast a stone at her, and when He looked up again they had all run away. That is what law does, it shows me myself and makes me flee from God.

If I talk of having fellowship with God, I must be able to bear and to enjoy His presence. It is not that I am good, but that God has cleansed me. It does not depend on my filthiness, but on His power to cleanse. When I have washed something, I do not keep thinking whether it was much dirty or little dirty, but that now it is clean. And so with saints, "But now ye are clean," and God delights to look on me, because He has washed me. It does not depend on my great or little sins, but on the good washing, on the value of the blood. So I read, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"; that is the good washing.

Now do you, beloved friends, believe this? If you do you are walking in the light, you cannot believe it any other way, for, of course, if I am in darkness, let me be a clean man or a dirty man, I cannot tell which I am.

Do you believe that you are washed? It is a personal question in which every man's conscience is brought into the light of God's presence. If you can stand there you stand in the rent veil, and in that you stand spotless. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." You have fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ. God has cleansed you, and He is delighted to do it. He loves to do it. Christ has died and done it. Once in that holy presence without spot, I can stand still and look back and admire the ways of grace. My soul, my heart, my conscience, are all engaged, and this produces integrity. If I am under law I may be trying to get God, but I cannot get to Him. God certainly looks upon these blind strivings, and reveals Christ in grace, but I can never reach Him through law.

The prodigal son had made up a speech for his father, asking him to make him a hired servant, and no doubt as he went along he thought, "Dear me, how shall I be received, and what will my father think of my rags?" The nearer he got to his father the more uneasy he would be, till at last, when his hand might be on the knocker, he would fear to knock. We know his father never let him wait for that, but rushed forth to meet him, and fell upon his neck. Then he forgot his speech that he had made. How, indeed, could he have uttered it? He might well be ashamed to do so with his father's arms about his neck, just as he was, rags and all. But the father did not like the rags for all that, and what was to be done? "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." So he bids us put on Christ, the best robe, to cover our filthy rags; and here comes in the 32nd Psalm: "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered."

Verse 9: "If we confess our sins," not sin merely, but sins. It is not a very humbling thing to confess that we are sinners, and have an evil nature in the abstract. We can all do this, and take it very quietly, too. We have an evil nature, but we have an evil conduct also when we do not keep down the evil nature.

There are the two distinct things - forgiveness of sins committed, and cleansing from sin in the abstract. Suppose, now, I was a wild, extravagant young man, and got into debt. Well, my father comes forward and pays my debt. Is that all about it - that I am free from debt? Oh, dear, no. I have grieved my kind father, and I want to confess that, and to have his forgiveness. I get both. My father is glad to have me. He has been on my neck. Still, though it is all grace to me, God says faithful and just, because Christ paid for me. God cannot have sin in His presence, and He wants me, so He washes me. That is it. And as Balak said to Balaam, "I wot he whom God blesses is blessed," so I wot he whom God cleanses is clean. Do I say I have no sin? If I do I am a liar, and I make God a liar. (vv. 6-10.)

I cannot come into God's presence at all except through Christ, and coming through Him I come spotless, absolutely clean. Then there is my daily weakness. I am reconciled as a matter of fact, but I am weak. So the details of such a one's course are now given. He who seeks to walk in the light often fails, but never excuses himself. He cannot say, "I could not help it," because God has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness." He often fails, but that does not alter the ground of his righteousness before God. Christ is my righteousness; I have no other. If you have any other, you are without "hope, and without God in the world"; you are alone. The agony of Christ and His death secured my righteousness. I change, 1 fail; He is unchangeable, infallible. Can He allow my guilt? No. He is my advocate as well as my propitiation, and I apply to God, and He forgives.

But will He allow me to go on without this? No. And does He use the law to charge my sin on me? Ah! no. Through the affections of my renewed heart, He can work all things in me. As my Advocate, He can make me feel my sin, and I say to myself, "You wretched creature, you have been delighted where Christ has been pained; you have gone and found your pleasure where Christ found His agony." That is what I can say to myself, and in fellowship with Christ I hate the sin I commit.

Jesus makes me feel my unkindness to Him, not by imputing it to me, but, as in Peter's case, the Lord turned and looked upon him. Peter boasted, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I." Jesus never charged the sin upon Peter, but it was enough He should look on him to convince him of sin. Had Jesus done with the matter then? No. After He was risen He said to Peter, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Hast thou still the same self-confidence? Is there still a root of pride? And Peter was grieved.

Now, perhaps I may show my pride through an impatient temper. Christ will convince me of it. He will not impute it to me, but He will remind me that He died that He might not impute it to me; and more than that, if

I do not judge that sin in myself He will, and He will never let me alone about it until it is cut up and broken down to the root.

If I detect my own pride, without indulging it, I may judge it myself, and then be humbled by my pride. It need not break forth if I do watch over it in this way. Christ ever lives to intercede for us, and He watches over our ways, and works in our hearts, souls, and consciences through the new affections, so that while there is all peace with God, there is none with sin. Some think it humbling that they must be cleansed every day. The feet must be washed, we must confess our sins, but sin is for ever put away. If you do not believe that your sins are put away by the sacrifice of Christ, what has God said to you? God has said, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission"; and God has said, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." J. N. Darby.

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