

# (The Full Gospel) 5. That Which Was From the Beginning

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the essential nature of life and fellowship in the Christian faith, urging believers to reflect the values of heaven in their lives and communities.*

**Scripture:** John 17:3, Romans 3:13, Hebrews 12:2, 1 John 1:1, Revelation 4:10, Revelation 13:8

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

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of life and fellowship as the core essence of Christianity, emphasizing that these were the foundational aspects from the beginning of time and will be the ultimate focus at the end of time. He highlights that the Divine life of love and the blessed fellowship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the central themes that John longs for believers to partake in. Poonen stresses that the church's primary goal is to manifest the life of God's kingdom through love, service, and blessing others, creating an atmosphere of heaven on earth.

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## Transcript

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life - and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

The letters of the apostles in the New Testament, although all inspired by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless display the level of maturity of the apostle at the time when he wrote that letter.

In this sense, we can say that 1 John would manifest the maximum maturity, because John wrote this towards the end of his life - when he was over 90 years old, and after having carefully observed the development of the church and of Christianity over a period of 60 years.

And what does John speak about?

What is his burden for the Christians in the various churches?

In his whole letter he never speaks even once about the gift of tongues or of healing or of any spiritual gift or even of evangelism! All these are good and necessary - but none of them are primary.

John speaks about those things which were from the beginning - those things which were with God from before time began - LIFE and FELLOWSHIP.

What God had from all eternity was the Divine life of love. And between Father, Son & Holy Spirit there existed a blessed and perfect fellowship of love. This is John's theme and burden. This is what he longs to partake of more and more and this is what he wants all believers to partake of more and more.

This is the ultimate goal of God - that we may partake of His nature and become one as the Father and Jesus are one (John 17:3, 21).

In the beginning, there was no preaching, no songbooks, no New-Testament-pattern church, and not even any doctrine. All of these came subsequently and were brought forth for a purpose, for a time. But there was only life and fellowship in the beginning.

In the same way, in the future, in eternity, once again there will be no preaching or songbooks or healing - but only life and fellowship.

So we see that at the beginning of time and at the end of time, only life and fellowship existed/will exist. All other things are only for this in-between period in which we are living right now.

To speak in tongues, for example, is an edifying experience. But we won't be needing that gift in heaven in eternity, because we will not have any limitations in our communication with God there. Preaching is a very necessary thing here on earth. But it won't be necessary in eternity.

Even victory over sin is only for a period - during the time when we are in the flesh and can be tempted. Once we reach heaven, we will no longer even be tempted. In the beginning, it was not "victory over sin" that God had, but a Divine life of perfect love!!

This is why we must see clearly that life and fellowship are the two most essential things needed in the church today. If we don't have these, then whatever else we may have in our church, we have failed God.

## Life

It is the life of God that must be found in our midst primarily - that life of love that always seeks to serve and bless others, and seeks their good. God's every action is designed to bless others. This is one of the primary characteristics of the Divine life.

In heaven, when we hear someone say something or see someone do something, we won't have any question in our minds as to their motive. The motive will only be to bless us. How wonderful if our fellowship on earth is like that now.

Among the unconverted, "the poison of snakes is under their lips" (Romans 3:13), and they speak words that are designed to sting and hurt others. But such a poison should never be found in the mouth of anyone in the church. In the church, everyone's words must be only to bless.

The Holy Spirit has come to bring the atmosphere of heaven into our hearts. Under the old covenant, they could only have laws that enabled them to live a life that was very righteous compared to the life of the rest

of humanity. But now we have more than just Divine laws to guide us, we have the Divine life itself to govern our actions.

Heaven is heaven because the presence of God is there. Where God is, there is heaven. Where God is not present, that is hell. Here on earth the presence of God is still found everywhere. And that is why we find some goodness even in unconverted people. But in hell, those very same people will be quite different. There their selfishness and their pride will be unrestrained, and they will be known as they really are, without the restraining influences of God's goodness.

In heaven there is also blessed fellowship. There is no lording it over others there. Everyone is a servant of others. Those like Lucifer who want to rule over others will never be found in heaven, for his attitude was, "It is better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven." That is the essence of the spirit of Satan - the desire to rule over others.

Therefore husbands who rule their wives like tyrants, and wives who do not submit to their husbands are creating a hell in their own homes.

Those brothers who lord it over others in their churches bring hell into their churches too, and build Babylon.

Heaven has a totally different spirit, because God is a Father there. He does not dominate people, but lovingly shepherds them and serves them. That is the nature we are to partake of.

We are promised crowns in heaven if we are faithful now. What does that mean? Does it mean that we will then rule people. No, not at all. It means that we who had a longing to serve our brothers here on earth, but could not do it perfectly because of various limitations, will find all those limitations gone in heaven, and we will be able to serve others perfectly. Thus the longing of our hearts will be fulfilled.

The greatest Person in heaven will be Jesus Himself and He will be the greatest servant of all. His spirit will forever be the spirit of service.

The church has been placed by God on earth to be a little sample of heaven, for others to taste of. It is something like a biscuit-company sending you a small sample of their biscuits and asking you to taste it and see whether you want more.

God also has sent us to earth to show forth the values of His kingdom to others, so that they may be attracted to Him. What taste do others get from us?

When Jesus walked on this earth, people saw and tasted a little sample of the life of heaven. They saw His compassion, His consideration for others, His purity and His selfless love and humility. Heaven is like that. God is like that - full of compassion for sinners and for those who have failed in life.

At the same time Jesus revealed the Father as One who was ruthless with religious hypocrites, and with those who make money in the name of God, and sends them to hell. Heaven won't have a single person who pretends to be holy, but who has no mercy on others.

When heaven comes down into our churches, our churches must manifest this kind of life. When Jesus (the Second Person of the Trinity) came down to earth He needed a body to manifest the life of God.

Now that the Holy Spirit (the Third person of the Trinity) has come down, he needs bodies too, to manifest the life of heaven in. If Jesus had been on earth without a body, think what limitation there would have been in His earthly life. No-one would have been able to know what God was like then. Thank God that Jesus had a body.

This is why it is so precious that we have bodies - because through them the life of God can be manifested to others by the Holy Spirit.

In the church, others must see this life of God. They must not see in just a set of doctrines or even a lot of zeal to preach. No. There must see much more than that. They must see the life of God's kingdom. Otherwise we have failed God as a church.

Even though our actions may not be perfect, our motives must be perfect. We may not be able to serve and bless others perfectly. But our motive must always be to glorify God and bless the others.

There are sisters in the churches who still haven't got rid of the flirtatious spirit that they had when they were unconverted and worldly. They still raise their eyebrows in a certain way, and toss their head in certain way - habits that they acquired from watching film-actresses in the movies in the old days. Such sisters are a hindrance to the witness of the church. These mannerisms will not disappear the moment you are converted. They will disappear only if you hate them, and work out your own salvation from them.

It is this life that makes us pure. If we don't have it, we will only be religious. It is good for us to examine ourselves constantly to see whether we are only religious or truly spiritual.

Here is one area where we could all examine ourselves:

How many of us who are married would honestly pray this prayer: "Lord, don't make me attractive in any way - physically, intellectually or otherwise - to anyone other than my marriage-partner". That would be the sincere heart-cry of every Christian man and woman who longs for total inward purity.

What a shame it is when married Christian men and women still seek to be attractive to others of the opposite sex. If such brothers and sisters come and sit in our midst, they must be made to feel uncomfortable every time they come to a meeting. That is our calling as a church - to make half-hearted, compromising believers uncomfortable in every meeting. We don't drive anybody out - unless they commit outward sin. But the fire in the church must make every religious humbug uncomfortable until he either repents or gets offended and leaves the church. These religious humbugs may fool the vast multitude in the church. But the elders must not be fooled.

Prophetic ministry in the church will make people uncomfortable who do not long for the atmosphere of heaven in their lives. Let us pray that we shall have such a ministry in our churches in every meeting.

There is a spirit of adultery in the world. A whole host of unclean spirits have flooded the world, especially in the last fifty years, like the frogs that flooded ancient Egypt (Compare Revelation 16:13 with Exodus 8:3-6). There are frogs in the bedrooms, frogs in the newspapers, frogs on the streets, frogs everywhere.

We hope that when we come to the church there won't be any frogs there. But Satan will send them there too. But it is our calling to cast out these unclean spirits, so that the spirit in the church is one of purity. There are young people and even older married people who have this spirit of the frog in them. Many of these are very zealous in religious activity. But they are impure.

We must all be careful. When you brothers are speaking to a woman or even to a sister, if you sense an unclean spirit (a frog) there, beware. Avoid her as you would avoid the plague, lest you destroy yourself finally.

Or conversely, if you sisters see impurity in the eyes of any man, or even in someone who calls himself a brother - a frog in the eye - then avoid him at any cost, if you would remain pure.

In ancient Egypt, in the land of Goshen (where the Israelites lived) there were no frogs. Our churches must be like that - free from impurity and filled with the atmosphere of heaven.

The measure in which you can bring the life of heaven into your church, determines the measure in which you are useful to the church. And the measure in which you bring any spirit other than the spirit of heaven into the church, in that measure you are an agent of Satan, hindering the work of God in your local church.

### Fellowship

When we have the life of God, it will lead to fellowship.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit had glorious fellowship with each other from all eternity. There was never any competition or jealousy among them at any time. All three Persons in the Godhead knew from all eternity what their ministries in relation to man would be.

It was not after Adam fell, that the Three Persons of the Godhead decided what to do. No. They knew the end from the beginning. And so Christ's death on the cross was in their mind from all eternity. The "Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

The coming of the Holy Spirit to earth was also known from all eternity. The fact that the Father would be the One to Whom the Son and the Holy Spirit would submit was also known from all eternity. Yet their differing ministries did not cause any difficulties between them.

It never disturbed the Son that He would be subject to the Father for all eternity to come (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Many wives find it difficult to be subject to their husbands even for 365 days. Many brothers find it a great problem to submit to older and wiser brothers. Yet the Son of God had no problem taking a low position.

That is one result of fellowship.

Where there is fellowship, there will be no competition or jealousy. Where there is no fellowship however, brothers will be constantly itching to be elders. Some, although willing to submit, are waiting for the day when they will become elders. This is the spirit of Lucifer.

Consider the ministry of the Holy Spirit. His is the most invisible of all the ministries in the Godhead. He encourages and helps in a silent, invisible way, without even wanting recognition or credit for His work. He is quite content for people to praise the Father and Jesus alone, and to be left out of the picture altogether. What a beautiful ministry.

What does it mean then to be filled with such a Spirit? It must mean that we will be like Him, content to have a ministry like His - silent, invisible, receiving no credit, and content for the credit to go to others.

Are we indeed filled with this Spirit?

Many who claim to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" today however seek such prominence for themselves through the exercise of their gifts on Christian platforms, promote themselves, and seek for money for themselves. All this is anything but the work of the Holy Spirit. All this is the work of some other spirit counterfeiting the Holy Spirit, and it is our duty in the church to expose such counterfeit and deception.

Is it because the life of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit is any less than that of the Father that they submit to Him. No. Their life is exactly the same in every way. They submit because it is the joy of each member of the Godhead to submit to each other. That is part of the life of God.

Is it because a sister's life is inferior to her husband's that God asks her to submit to her husband. No. It is because her ministry is different. How wonderful if all sisters could see this glory of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But alas, there are very few sisters who have seen this glory.

If a sister has not seen her calling to submit to the man as the head in the church, there is every danger that she will become a Jezebel in that church (Revelation 2:20). And the Lord will then rebuke the elders in such a church, like He rebuked the elder in Thyatira - for the fault is always with the elders, when a Jezebel is allowed to flourish in a church. Jezebels bring the spirit of Lucifer into a church and the elders must be strong to drive that spirit right out, as soon as it begins to manifest itself. The woman herself does not have to be driven out. But her spirit must be brought into subjection to Divinely-appointed leadership in the church. We don't need dictators as elders, but we do need firm fathers.

If the spirit of heaven is to be found in a church, then we have to be firm to resist every manifestation of the spirit of hell.

Wherever this genuine life of God is found, there will always be found this quality of fellowship too between the brothers and sisters. And wherever such a quality of fellowship is not found, we can say with absolute certainty that the genuine life of God is not there. All that such brothers and sisters. All they must be having is religion.

The fellowship that is found in the Godhead is what the Lord wants to reproduce in every church everywhere.

Jesus valued that fellowship with the Father more than anything else. It was when He knew that that fellowship would be broken for three hours on the cross that He cried out in Gethsemane, asking if there wasn't any other way to save the human race without His having to pay such a tremendous cost.

We cannot fully realise what a great cost that was to Jesus, because none of us have ever valued the fellowship of the Father like He did. We see that after that extended time of prayer, Jesus was willing to lose even His most valued possession (fellowship with the Father), in order to save our souls. That is where we see the greatness of His love for us.

Many see the love of Jesus in His being willing to suffer physically and to die on the cross. But that physical suffering was not even one-millionth of what He suffered when His fellowship with the Father was broken because of our sin, for those three dark hours on Calvary's cross. One day, when we see Him face to face, we will see that that was the greatest manifestation of His love for us.

It was because Jesus valued fellowship with the Father so much that He "cried with loud crying and tears" to the Father to save Him from death (spiritual death). The only thing that Jesus ever wanted to be saved from was a break of fellowship with the Father. He was willing to lose everything else. Everything else was utter garbage for Him.

It is only when we consider everything as garbage (and even as human dung) compared to fellowship with the Father, that we will find that fellowship with the Father that the apostle John wrote of in his first epistle. It is such fellowship with the Father that in turn brings to true fellowship with each other in the church.

Another aspect of heaven is seen in Revelation 4:10. There we read that the elders "cast their crowns down before God". No-one but Jesus will have crown on His head in heaven. All the rest of us will be ordinary brothers and sisters there. There are no special brothers or sisters in heaven. Those who seek to be special brothers or sisters in the church bring the atmosphere of hell into the church.

We will also never boast of anything when we stand before the Father. Everything that we have, we will cast down before Him. In heaven, no-one will ever say "This is mine", concerning anything he may have (not even concerning the crown that he received).

When the atmosphere of heaven begins to pervade our churches, we too will never again say concerning anything that we may have, "This is mine". Everything will be considered as God's and therefore as available freely for the spread of God's kingdom on earth.

Every miser and every selfish person who lives for himself and his own gain is under the control of Satan.

It is a great grief to God's heart that there is no fellowship between millions of His children on earth. So many have bitterness against others. Others are self-righteous Pharisees who imagine that God has chosen only them and not the others.

God is distressed with both these groups of His children - for they are all frustrating His purpose for the church.

The most valuable brother and sister in any church is the one who can bring the atmosphere of heaven into a church and who can build fellowship between the brothers and sisters in that church.

And this need not necessarily be the elder brother. All of us have the opportunity to become such valuable brothers and sisters.

Think if there is a brother or a sister in a church, who whenever he/she comes into a meeting or into a home, is like a pure breeze from heaven blowing through the room. What a precious brother/sister such a person is! Even if he stops by and visits you for just five minutes, you feel refreshed. You feel as if heaven came into your home for five minutes! He may not have given you a sermon or even a word of revelation from the Scriptures. But he was so pure. He was not moody or gloomy and had no complaints against anyone. Such a brother may never speak first in a meeting (as many have the lust to do). He may speak fifteenth in every meeting perhaps, and that too for just three minutes. But those will be three minutes of heaven in the meeting!

Since the world is full of complainers and murmurers, it is so refreshing to meet a brother like that. It is just like having a bath, on a hot, sticky day! That is the type of brother/sister that we all should long to be like. Jesus was like that and He wants to make us like that too.

How sad it is that instead of doing that, many brothers and sisters are going around creating more problems wherever they go. They go around separating the brothers and sisters from each other by their gossiping. These are the servants and agents of Lucifer.

We are called to live with each other exactly as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit lived with each other. They were not preaching to each other back there in eternity past, but having fellowship. We too are not called to preach to each other, but to have fellowship.

That is heaven. And that is where the new and living way is meant to lead us to. I fear that many of us have got so taken up with the way that we have never arrived at the destination - fellowship with the Father.

Think if you were coming for a conference to Bangalore, and on the way you got so taken up with admiring the road that leads to Bangalore, that you never reach Bangalore at all. And think if a number of you sat on the road halfway to Bangalore and began to share with each other the virtues of the road, instead of traveling on it. You would never reach Bangalore at all.

That is a fair description of what goes on in many churches today. They are always talking about the new and living way through the flesh - about putting the flesh to death and bearing the dying of Jesus etc., etc., - without realising that this has value only because it leads us inside the veil (Hebrews 10:20) to meet and fellowship with the Father.

Jesus was never taken up with the cross itself in His daily life. He did not enjoy the cross. We are told that He endured it (Hebrews 12:2). The joy for Jesus was what was "set before Him" - fellowship with the Father. This is the joy that we must be taken up with too.

Way back in the beginning, when only God existed, there was no flesh to be put to death, and that is why John does not even mention it in His epistle - not because it is not important, but because that is not his theme. John emphasises what was from the beginning - life and fellowship. Let us emphasise these too in our churches at all times.

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