

LIFE, LOVE and LIGHT

The Gospel of John and First Epistle of John

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CHAPTER FIVE

A FELLOWSHIP - THREEFOLD AND THREE-TENSE

"That ye also may have fellowship with us" (I John 1:3)

The first word in this Epistle designed to bring that which JESUS manifested in His earthly life over into Christian experience, to be experimentally known and proved through the living out of the Abiding Life, is "**fellowship**."

It is meant to be:

I

A Fellowship in Light, Love and Life

It is John who, with the utmost simplicity and directness, gives us three irreducible statements of the being and nature of GOD: "**God is Light**" (I John 1:5); "**God is Love**" (I John 4:8); "**God is Spirit**" (John 4:24).

Here, then, we are handed the key to this remarkable Epistle, so simple and fundamental in its truths as almost to forbid analysis. Dividing at the beginning of chapter three:

- (1) "**God is Light**" determines the truth and teaching, the life, character and conduct of the first half.
- (2) "**God is Love**" in like manner dominates the second half.
- (3) "**God is Spirit**," Life in the absolute, therefore communicable, as in creation and again in re-creation, this is the pervasive element of the entire Epistle, that without which no other experience of GOD were possible, for if GOD were incapable of communicating Life, He could by no means communicate Light or Love.

This, then, bears out what we have previously noted that Life, the Abiding Life, is the "binder" of Light and Love, rendering the three inseparable in manifestation and experience (Gospel and

Epistle) as they are, and ever must be, in GOD the Eternal.

1. **A FELLOWSHIP.** And what a fellowship it is! The word, in the Greek, means a "*having in common.*" A communion of possession and interest that results from a "communicating." How suggestive! It pictures precisely what is made possible by the Abiding Life, the communicating of life and nature from vine to branch, resulting in a community of possession, operation and expression.

2. **A FRIENDSHIP.** This is a word that greatly enriches for us the meaning of fellowship. In this same Vine-and-Branch chapter, after referring to the fruit from this union, JESUS says, "**Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you**" (John 15:15). Here is the inwardness of friendship, the readiness and desire not to withhold but to share with the other all that we know, have and are. JESUS has taken us into friendship. And now, from the glory, He has nothing to withhold - all that He is He communicates. In His friendship we have fellowship of the highest sort.

3. **A COMPANIONSHIP.** The word is of Latin derivation, meaning to "*break bread together.*" This, in oriental custom, only friends do. And the doing of it affords to friendship its desired opportunity for fellowship. This longing is in the heart of our glorified Lord; "**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me**" (Revelation 3:20).

What a privilege to have CHRIST within, in the intimate fellowship of "table talk," communicating to us without reserve what He thinks, is, and has for us.

II

A Fellowship, Past, Present and Future

What a range His fellowship covers. For He is a three-tense being, who "**is, was, and is to come.**" He says of Himself: "**I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen**" (Revelation 1:18). When in the HOLY SPIRIT we are baptized into such as He we are baptized into a three-tense experience of Him:

1. **MANIFESTED IN THE PAST,** on earth, in the flesh, for our salvation (I John 1:1-3). At no time can we fail to root our Christian experience in His incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Paul, in his yearning for the best and truest fellowship, goes back to this: "**That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death**" (Philippians 3:10).

2. **MANIFESTED IN THE PRESENT,** in Heaven, for us and for our sanctification. He is there as our "**Advocate with the Father**" (I John 2:1, 2). And now He has fellowship with us by and through His HOLY SPIRIT, that other Advocate, or Comforter (the same Greek word), sent to be "**with us**" (John 14:16). Note that He does not call the Spirit "an" Advocate, as though His was the only ministry of this sort, but "**another**" Advocate, lawyer, counsellor, one who cares for our case and meets our spiritual needs, He to "**abide with us**" while our Lord JESUS CHRIST carries on His advocacy for us "**with the Father.**" One there, another here, "**that we may not**

sin," that this barrier to our fellowship with Him, our Holy GOD, may be kept from coming in between.

3. **MANIFESTED IN THE FUTURE,** He will be, to the loving, welcoming gaze of His children. While we are already the children of GOD, in the blessed fellowship of the divine family that is ever the thought of this Epistle, yet it reaches on with expectation into the more glorious future: "**it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is**" (I John 3:2). And future though this manifestation in His likeness be, the ministry of "hope" makes it a present, transforming factor in our fellowship: "**And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure**" (I John 3:3).

Thus is secured a present kinship of purity that promotes and makes more possible the communication of Himself in His perfecting Light, Love and Life. It is ever presented thus in Scripture, called the "**blessed hope,**" for He uses it to bless even now in bringing us into closer fellowship with, and likeness to Himself.

III

A Fellowship Godward, Selfward, Brotherward

He who would read aright this Epistle and gather from its teachings that which will turn to his personal, spiritual profit, must:

1. **KEEP THE WINDOWS OF HIS SOUL OPEN GODWARD,** as the source of all spiritual life and blessing. "**Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**"

Therefore we are exhorted to "**have fellowship with Him,**" to "**abide in Him,**" to live in such a manner that we may "**know Him,**" to refuse everything, be it of the world, the flesh, or false doctrine, that militates against the vitality of the bond between us.

2. **LET THE TRUTH HAVE ITS DESIRED AND WONTED EFFECT SELFWARD,** as the vessel GOD has chosen into which to pour His truth, yea Himself. Confessedly such a vessel must be clean. Fellowship with unsullied Light, with unadulterated Love, with unspotted Life - such a fellowship cannot leave the heart and life unclean. At once comes a consciousness of sin. We are pained at the disparity between our walk and His. We are ashamed to receive His love in our hearts and there, with it, harbor hatred.

3. **LET THIS HEAVENLY FELLOWSHIP FLOW OUT FROM HIM BROTHERWARD.** GOD has constituted us a family, a redeemed brotherhood, to demonstrate the family characteristics, received from the Father. in our conduct the one toward the other. That which we receive in fellowship with Him we are to press on through a like true fellowship with them. Having our window open heavenward to bask in the sunshine of His love, we must hold our door open earthward, that others may feel the warmth and reality of that love, not in word and with the tongue but in such ministry as may be required.

Called to such a fellowship, its contemplation must lead to an abandon in which our blessed Lord takes the ascendancy over every possible interest of life.

Long years were spent for me
In weariness and woe,
That through eternity
Thy glory I might know.

Long years were spent for me!
Have I spent one for Thee?

Oh, let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent;
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent:
To Thee my all I bring,
My Saviour and my King.

- *Frances Ridley Havergal*

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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