

## Great is the Fellowship with the Lord

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主との交わりのすばらしさ  
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### 1 John

1:1 What existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we observed and touched with our own hands—this is the Word of life!

1:2 This life was revealed to us, and we have seen it and testify about it. We declare to you this eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.

1:3 What we have seen and heard we declare to you so that you, too, can have fellowship with us. Now this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus, the Messiah.

1:4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be full.

1:7 But if we keep living in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

[International Standard Version].

What is the most common source of worry in this world? The most common disease nowadays is not cancer. It is an illness called solitude. Cancer is not such a serious disease as it used to be. There may not even be much difference between a cold and cancer in that sense. However, it is horrible to have the disease called loneliness. When you suffer from this disease, what is absolutely necessary to cure it is to have a 'fellowship'.

In these verses we just read, appeared an expression, "so that you can have fellowship with us." It also says, "so that our joy may be full." I always have a hard time in choosing a nice word of encouragement for people in deep distress and very often I use a word, 'soon'. This word, 'soon' does not appear in the Bible, but there is a phrase that points to the same thing; "in a very little while." The author of Hebrews wrote these words to encourage brothers and sisters of his days, who were distressed by various things;

### Hebrews

9:28 The Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. And he will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who eagerly wait for him.

10:37 For in a very little while the one who is

coming will return— he will not delay.

After all, he will return soon. When people come to know Jesus, they are given a brilliant and great future. For them, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life itself. Our future is in darkness without Jesus. Contrarily, those who come to know Jesus can live positively in peace, filled with joy. It is because they have definite conviction; it is a conviction that Jesus will return soon. It makes us feel so happy to imagine that today might be the day. No matter how severe the situation we are placed in, no matter how hard the problems we face, we can move on to our future filled with hope. This is why we should always keep in mind that, "in a very little while the Lord will return." But, we are not in heaven yet and we all have something to worry about. We are all heavily burdened. For this reason, it is extremely important to have a 'fellowship' and release yourself from loneliness, as I just mentioned.

What was very special about the people of early churches was that they had a fellowship. They were unified in a true sense. Please open chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles and see how the early churches were. Let us look at the Acts of the Apostles to find out how the true fellowship of the people saved by the grace of the Lord was.

### Acts

2:42 The believers continued to devote themselves to what the apostles were teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to times of prayer.

2:43 A sense of fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

2:44 All the believers were united and shared everything with one another.

2:45 They made it their practice to sell their possessions and goods and to distribute the proceeds to anyone who was in need.

2:46 United in purpose, they went to the Temple every day, ate at each other's homes, and shared their food with glad and humble hearts.

2:47 They were praising God and enjoying the good will of all the people. Every day the Lord was adding to their number those who were being saved.

Believers mentioned in these verses were the ones saved on the day of Pentecost and it was written that they obeyed the words of the apostles. Then, what did the apostles tell them to do? Needless to say, the apostles proclaimed the teachings of Jesus. In actuality, it was rather Jesus himself than his teachings. We are not supposed to proclaim any specific teaching of Jesus; instead we have to introduce Jesus himself.

What is absolutely necessary for us, living in the end

time, is to remain in the teachings of the apostles. However, at the same time, we also have to be aware of how the fellowship among believers should be. If the 'teaching of apostles' refers to Jesus himself, then the fellowship among believers should be equivalent to the fellowship with Jesus. As we read the Bible, we see that only one kind of fellowship is described in there. It is the fellowship with Father God and his son, Lord Jesus.

#### 1 Corinthians

1:9 Faithful is the God by whom you were called into fellowship with his Son Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.

This fellowship with the son, Lord Jesus, is the source of the fellowship among believers. Do we truly understand the fellowship with the Father and his son, Jesus? Needless to say, this fellowship does not arise from arguments. Fellowship begins neither because people share the same doctrine nor as a result of a majority vote in some meeting. This fellowship is a communication of life and spirit. There should be no dark side or hidden part in this fellowship.

Indeed, perfect reliance must be placed at the foundation of fellowship with the Father God and his son Jesus. Of course, it used to be that way (between the Father and his son). Father God trusted the Lord Jesus from the bottom of his heart. He taught all his thoughts, all his intentions and his plans to Jesus before he entrusted everything to him. He could entrust all his plans to Jesus with no angst at all.

The attitude of Jesus toward his father was exactly the same. Jesus totally relied on his Father God and obeyed his will without asking any questions. Even in the midst of the horribly deep distress he went through, even while he was walking toward the cross, he never stopped believing for a moment. He placed absolute reliance on his Father in heaven. "Not what I want but what you want." This was the everlasting attitude Jesus had in his mind. Jesus and his Father God trusted each other so deeply that there was always constant peace and tranquility between them. The Bible says that this mutual trust is itself the fellowship.

It is an amazing blessing that human beings are allowed to join this wonderful fellowship between the Father and his son, the Lord Jesus, isn't it? How come the Lord invited us to this fellowship? The only reason we can understand is that it is a result of the immeasurable love of the Lord. Jesus came down to this world to call each human being into this fellowship. The sincerest wish of Jesus during the days he lived in this world was that his disciples could enter this fellowship.

Likewise, we were not saved just to be saved, but we were saved in order to partake of this wonderful fellowship. We were called in by the Lord, not just to ease our self-reproach and obtain the conviction of salvation, but to enter this fellowship; it is for the purpose of taking part in this fellowship with him. When we come into the fellowship with Father and the Lord Jesus, we actually enter the fellowship with other believers. This is described in the Acts of the Apostles.

Believers described in the Acts of the Apostles were not especially chosen people. The disciples too were ordinary people and did not have anything special. Then, how were the apostles transformed? They were appointed by Jesus and were called in to work with him. It can be seen in chapter 3 of the Gospel according to Mark.

#### Mark

3:13 Then Jesus went up on a hillside and called to himself those whom he had decided on, and they approached him.

3:14 He appointed the Twelve, whom he called apostles, to accompany him, to be sent out to preach,

As we can see from these verses, Jesus first appointed the apostles to accompany him and then to be sent out into the world.

In a great divine school in Switzerland, a huge world map is put up on the wall of the entrance hall. On the left-hand side of the map, there is a sign that says, 'Come!' in the German language. On the right-hand side, there is another sign where it is written, 'Go!'. "Come! Come! Now, go!" Jesus is a man like that. Once you come close to Jesus, you will never be able to keep your mouth shut. You won't be able to help but proclaim Jesus. However, if you do not keep praying for unsaved people, I must say that your faith is extremely questionable. We were not saved just for our own salvation. We are supposed to help all unsaved people to know Jesus.

Jesus first called his disciples in to accompany him. It was also to send them out into the world afterwards. Jesus desired his disciples and all believers to enter the fellowship he already had with his father since the eternal past. Moreover, Jesus wants all of us to be a part of this fellowship today just like he wished for the people during those days. What a great privilege that we are allowed to enter the fellowship with the Father and his son, Jesus. It will be so pitiful if you are not interested in this fellowship and instead are fulfilled by worldly things.

We tend to believe that the most important thing is to serve Jesus, which is actually wrong. It is not what the Lord wants. Jesus first seeks for us to have fellowship with himself. Many people believe that

good servants are those who work very hard for the Lord. This is totally different from what the Lord thinks. Unfortunately, there are so many believers who serve the Lord so enthusiastically, but do not have an intimate fellowship with him. I must say that such people are so pitiful.

Just like his disciples, we were appointed by the Lord to be released from this world and sins. But, that is not all. We were invited to participate in the fellowship with the Father and his son, Jesus. To have a fellowship between believers is to have a fellowship with the Father and his son, the Lord Jesus, and as I just mentioned, it is a fellowship of life. The fellowship which is the body of Jesus; in other words, the fellowship between believers, is the fellowship of life. Thus there should be no limitation, no anxiety, no doubt there, but total reliance. Each one of us is invited to this fellowship. Now, the problem is how we can enter this fellowship, this total reliance.

The disciples did not have intimate fellowship with Jesus right from the beginning. They certainly lived with him for three and half years. However, they did not have a fellowship in a true sense. At the beginning of their living together, they just shared some part of their lives with Jesus at best. Then, Jesus appointed them as his apostles and they lived together for three and a half years. During these years, to make his intention clear to his disciples, he made every effort to enter an intimate fellowship with them. Jesus tried to guide them into a fellowship with the Father God but they were not prepared to accept it. They could not understand its significance at all. What Jesus wanted with his disciples was a fellowship based on complete trust and without any dispute. However, when Jesus sought to reveal his intention, the disciples were not prepared to understand it. They totally misunderstood Jesus. Furthermore, the disciples could not even have a deep fellowship among each other. What they had was a mutual relationship or just a friendship at best. Not only did they have no true fellowship among them, but the disciples even had conflicts with each other in various aspects of their lives from time to time.

Twelve apostles, except Judas, loved Jesus from the bottom of their hearts. Because of this love, they chose to abandon all things they had and willingly followed Jesus. Nevertheless, there was no true fellowship among each other. They became envious, misunderstood each other and argued all the time. In particular, two disciples, James and John, who were actually brothers, both claimed that they deserved to be the leader. They came to ask Jesus behind the backs of other disciples. Let us look at some verses;

Mark

10:35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee,

went to Jesus and told him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you."

10:36 He asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

10:37 They asked him, "Let us sit in your glory, one on your right and one on your left."

10:38 But Jesus told them, "You don't realize what you're asking. Can you drink from the cup that I'm going to drink from or be baptized with the baptism with which I'm going to be baptized?"

10:39 They told him, "We can." Jesus told them, "You will drink from the cup that I'm going to drink and be baptized with the baptism with which I'm going to be baptized."

10:40 But it's not up to me to grant you a seat at my right or my left. Those positions have already been prepared for others."

10:41 When the ten other disciples heard this, they began to be furious with James and John.

They got so mad! As we can see from these verses, the disciples did not have a fellowship in a true sense among each other. However, after the Pentecost, they totally changed.

From the day of the Pentecost, the disciples began to have a true fellowship. When Peter stood up, the other 11 disciples also stood up immediately according to the Bible. When Peter rose to his feet, the others all rose with him. Moreover, it was not that they arranged to do so in advance. It occurred that way simultaneously at their own initiative. They were no longer independent; these 12 people now formed one body.

The key player of the day of the Pentecost was certainly Peter. However, we can see from the Bible that it was not only Peter who played an important role. It is written that all people in there were startled when they saw the disciples. It was not just Peter. Pentecost was a birthday of churches, which were the body of Jesus so to speak. This true church does not refer to any particular religious society or organization; it is one organic body. From this very moment, all believers were connected as members of one body that had Jesus as its head. Peter and the other disciples were truly unified as one body in the church. They had a fellowship of spirit. Disciples came to trust each other. There was no conflict anymore and they were not afraid of each other. They were literally one body.

Until Pentecost, this kind of fellowship could only be found in heaven between the Father God and the Lord Jesus. However, since this day of Pentecost, many people came into the same fellowship. It is recorded that 3000 people were added to this fellowship. According to the Bible, these people obeyed the teachings of the disciples and they formed the fellowship of believers. When they accepted the intention of Jesus as the standard of

their lives, they could have a conviction that they were already a part of the fellowship of believers. This fellowship did not come from outside but it was raised by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Let us look at some verses that explain this;

#### Ephesians

4:4 There is one body and one Spirit. Likewise, you were called to the one hope of your calling.  
4:5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
4:6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all.

The unified and intimate fellowship arose from all these things combined. To have fellowship is to share all things with one another. This was what brothers and sisters of early churches did. Let us read again the verse 44 of chapter 2, Acts of Apostles;

#### Acts

2:44 All the believers were united and shared everything with one another.

Not just most of the believers, but all the believers were united.

Nobody claimed for possession of anything among them. Instead, according to the Bible, they were united in purpose. Not only were they united in spirit, but they shared their thoughts, their desires and their will. This is how the fellowship of believers is supposed to be like and this is exactly, as parts of the body of Jesus, how we need to be. We will be truly blessed when each one of us can proudly claim that we obey all teachings of the disciples and we have entered the fellowship of believers.

During the three and half years the disciples lived with Jesus, they did not have this true fellowship. I suppose that these three and half years were a preparation period before entering the fellowship. These years may seem to be unfruitful time. However, it was during these years that their old nature was squeezed out little by little and eventually was totally removed. Even if the disciples had not come with Jesus and instead had continued to work on their own jobs, they still would have been respected as faithful citizens. However, as they walked with Jesus, they were shown how miserable they truly were and then were led to a fundamental regeneration in the hands of Jesus. As they were illuminated by the light of Lord, the dark side of their hearts was exposed and their hearts were transformed. The desires hidden deep within their hearts was revealed. Of course, the disciples were relatively people of good will, but still, as they were exposed to the light of Jesus, they were shown how hopeless and wicked the true nature of their hearts was. When Jesus was crucified, they totally gave in to despair. They were broken apart and ran away

into all directions.

Let us see what the secret of the fellowship provided through the Bible is.

#### 1 John

1:7 If we keep living in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

However, because of all worries and anxieties, we cannot keep living in the light but actually, we cannot even stand in the light, can we? When we are illuminated by the light of Jesus, we will realize that our innate nature is totally degenerate, useless and impure.

When we have right fellowship with Jesus, our fellowship with each other will also be right. May the Holy Spirit be poured onto us so that we will be unified as one body. This exactly is the purpose of the guidance of the Lord. What kind of fellowship is it? It is a fellowship of light, fellowship of life and fellowship of love.

When we have such fellowship among us, his glory will be revealed as if the Lord himself is standing there. We will be allowed to share in his glory.

God's house refers to a living church of God, which is the pillar of truth, the foundation of truth. We too want to be a part of a church like this, don't we? Let us offer thankfulness from a grateful heart to the Lord, who appointed us and allowed us to enter the fellowship with the Father and his son, Jesus.

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