

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John,

Message 26

**THE VIRTUES OF THE DIVINE
BIRTH TO PRACTICE
THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS (2)**

Bible Verses:

- 1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
- 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.
- 9 Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot

sin, because he has been begotten of God.

In the Epistle of 1 John there are three main sections: the fellowship of the divine life (1:1—2:11), the teaching of the divine anointing (vv. 12-27), and the virtues of the divine birth (v. 28—5:21). The sequence of these sections indicates that the fellowship of the divine life and the teaching of the divine anointing bring us into the virtues of the divine birth. In the third section we see how much enjoyment we receive from the divine birth. In particular, this enjoyment is related to the virtues of the divine birth. The divine birth brings in many virtues. Only by the fellowship of the divine life and by the teaching of the divine anointing can we experience and enjoy all the virtues imparted to us through the divine birth.

According to 1 John, the first of these virtues is to practice the divine righteousness. The practice of the divine righteousness has a basis, and this basis is the divine birth (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The divine birth brings us the divine seed, and through this seed we partake of the divine

nature for our growth in the divine life. The divine life is the means for us to abide in the Triune God. If we did not have the human life, we could not abide in humanity. Likewise, if we did not have the divine life, we could not abide in the Triune God. But because we have the divine life, by this life we can abide in the Triune God. By the divine life as the means, we can also live this life in our human living. This means that we can live a life that practices the divine righteousness, loves the brothers, and overcomes all negative things.

Practicing righteousness is a matter that is habitual and unintentional as a common daily life. Hence, to practice the divine righteousness is to do righteousness habitually and unintentionally as our daily living. However, if we do righteousness intentionally with a purpose, that is not a matter of our common daily life. Rather, it is to behave in a political way. Someone may do righteousness with a purpose of gaining a position or a name for himself. That is to behave in a political way. But we Christians, as children of God, should be saturated with the righteous God so that spontaneously we live a life that

practices righteousness habitually and unintentionally. Instead of doing a particular act of righteousness for a certain purpose, we practice righteousness as our common daily life. This is an issue of the fellowship of the divine life and the anointing of the Divine Trinity. Furthermore, this is an expression of the righteous God. Through abiding in the righteous God, we are infused and saturated with Him. Then our living becomes an expression of the righteous God with whom we have been infused and saturated. This righteous God then becomes our righteous living, our daily righteousness. This practice of righteousness is not merely outward behavior but the manifestation of the inward life. As we have pointed out, this is not an act done for a purpose; it is the flow of life from within the divine nature of which we partake.

First John 3:1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” The love of God was manifested by His sending of His Son to die for us (4:9; John 3:16) in order that we might have

His life and thus become His children (1:12-13). God's sending of His Son was that He might beget us. Hence, the love of God is a begetting love, particularly in the Father.

Because we are the children of God by a mysterious birth with the divine life, the world does not know us. The world is ignorant of our being regenerated by God; it does not know us, because it did not know God Himself. It was ignorant of God, so it is also ignorant of our divine birth.

In 3:2 John goes on to say, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is." Since we are the children of God, we will be like Him in the maturity of life when He is manifested. To be like Him is "what we will be." This has not yet been manifested. This indicates that the children of God have a great future with a more splendid blessing. We will not only have the divine nature but will also bear the divine likeness. To partake of the divine nature is already a great blessing and enjoyment, yet to be like God, bearing His likeness, will be a

greater blessing and enjoyment.

First John 3:2 indicates that the children of God have a great future. However, I have heard some saints say that they do not have a future. These saints need to realize that they have a great future with splendid blessings. Our future is indicated by the word it has not yet been manifested what we will be. What we will be is a divine mystery. Because it is such a mystery, it must be something great. We are not able to imagine what our future will be. The fact that our future has not yet been manifested indicates that it will be wonderful. Although it has not been manifested what we will be, we know that when the Son is manifested, we will be like the Triune God.

No one who is a child of God practices sin habitually. We may sin occasionally, but we do not practice sin habitually. For instance, if someone has the practice of lying continually, this is a sign that he probably has not been born of God. Someone who has the divine life in him as a seed cannot lie habitually. However, due to weakness, a child of God may lie in a particular circumstance. But because he is a child of God,

he will not lie habitually. Instead of practicing sin, those who are children of God practice righteousness habitually.

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In verse 8 John goes on to say, “He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” In this verse John says that the Son of God was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. The Greek word translated “for this purpose” literally means “unto this, that is, to this end. The devil has sinned continually from ancient times and

begets sinners that they might practice sin with him. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might undo and destroy the sinful deeds of the devil—that is, condemn, through His death on the cross in the flesh (Rom. 8:3), sin initiated by him, the evil one; destroy the power of sin, the sinful nature of the devil (Heb. 2:14); and take away both sin and sins. On the cross Christ condemned sin, took away sin and sins, and destroyed the power of the devil.

The reason a child of God does not practice sin is that “His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God.” The seed here denotes God’s life, which we received of God when we were begotten of Him. This life, as the divine seed, abides in every regenerated believer. Hence, such a one does not practice sin and cannot sin. The words cannot sin in this verse mean cannot live in sin habitually. A regenerated believer may fall into sin occasionally, but the divine life as the divine seed in his regenerated nature will not allow him to live in sin.

Verse 9 speaks of the habitual living of the children of God. As God’s children, we have the

divine life, a life that does not sin. Therefore, when we live by this life, we do not practice sin. But why do we sometimes still sin? The answer to this question is that we commit sin occasionally because our body is still in the old creation. Our body is not only the body created by God but also the body that has become the flesh because it has been poisoned and corrupted by the devil through sin. We still have sin in our flesh. If we live by the spirit, that is, if we live by the divine life in our spirit, we will not sin. But if instead of living in the spirit we live in the flesh or do things according to the flesh, we are likely to commit sin.

If we would enjoy the divine life, we need to remain in the fellowship of the divine life. In order to remain in this fellowship, we need to abide in the Lord, who is the Triune God. Furthermore, if we would abide in the Triune God, we need to abide in Him according to the teaching of the divine anointing. If we do not care for the anointing, we will lose the fellowship.

Because many Christians do not care for the anointing, they do not remain in the fellowship of the divine life. Some do not even understand

what the fellowship of the divine life is. Instead of caring for the anointing, the *chrisma*, in their spirit, they care for doctrines and theology. Because they do not care for the *chrisma* in their spirit, they are not in the fellowship of the divine life and therefore do not have the enjoyment of the divine life. But in the Lord's recovery we care for the anointing, the *chrisma*. Through this anointing we enjoy the virtues 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]: In the epistle of 1 John, there are three main sections, the fellowship of the divine life from the beginning of the book through chapter 2:11, the teaching of the anointing starting in chapter 2:12-27, and the virtues of the divine birth from chapter 2 verses 28 through the end of the book, chapter 5:21. The sequence of these three sections is important, and it indicates that the fellowship of the divine life and the teaching of the divine anointing bring us into the virtues of the divine birth. Well, today you've joined Bob Denker and I as we're discussing this third section. Bob, could you give our listeners a background to today's life-study message from 1 John?

[BD]: Well, Matt, of course, we've almost covered the first two chapters of this book. In the beginning of this book, the apostle John tells us that there was one who was in the beginning. This One who is the eternal life was incarnated. He became a man with a solid human form. And so, John says that they, the apostles, saw Him with their eyes, they heard Him with their ears, they handled Him with their hands. And now they were reporting this person to the believers so that the believers might have fellowship with the apostles and with the Triune God. So when the believers receive the report of the apostles concerning Christ, then they receive the very eternal life, which is Christ Himself. This life enters into them, and they are brought into a marvelous realm called the fellowship of life. And this fellowship of life is just the flowing, the circulation of the divine life in our being, especially in our spirit. Now, according to 1 John here, we need to know how to maintain this fellowship. And the first thing we need to do is to walk in the light so that we realize that we still have sin. And we need to confess our sins and be forgiven. This is the first thing we need to do to maintain the fellowship of the divine life.

The second thing we need to do is to love the brothers. We need to love one another. Certainly, if we don't love each other or our fellow believers, we will lose the fellowship of life. Then John ushers us into this wonderful matter of the teaching of the divine anointing. This anointing that John mentions here refers to the Spirit who is within us and who moves within us to anoint us with God and with all the riches of what God is. And this anointing, as it moves in us, it teaches us concerning the Triune God. And according to its teaching, we abide in the Triune God. And that brings us, as you mentioned, to the third section of the book, which is the virtues of the divine birth. And that is where we begin our fellowship today.

[MM]: I want to read chapter 2, verse 29, as we begin our program today. It says, "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also has been begotten of Him." This is a key phrase, that we have been begotten of Him. Let's go to Witness Lee for the printed life-study message number 26 from the life-study of 1 John.

Part 1

[MM]: Bob, when we abide in the Lord, then practicing the divine righteousness is effortless and even unconscious. I enjoyed that word, unconscious. I'm going to give an example and then I'd like you to comment. Have you noticed that when drivers are breaking the speed limit or any other moving vehicle violation, that they're constantly looking over their shoulder to see if a policeman is noticing

them as they break the law. This watching over the shoulder is not a part of abiding in the Lord, is it? It's completely different than that.

[BD]: It's very different. Actually, we need to realize, I was so impressed by what Witness Lee said here, we have been born of God. That means we have God's life with God's divine nature within us. And in this life and in this nature, there are many, many virtues and attributes. It goes along with the nature that we have received. So if we are filled with the divine life, if the divine life has the chance, the opportunity to grow in us and to fill us, then more and more we will spontaneously live a righteous life, a life that is, as you said, effortlessly righteous, not deliberately doing righteous things as looking over the shoulder to see if the policeman is around so that we won't get a traffic ticket. No, we don't need to live in such an outward and intentional way. We need to enjoy the divine nature that we have received from the Lord and allow this nature to be lived out of us unintentionally and effortlessly as a habitual thing, actually a matter of daily living. It's a spontaneous thing, just as you don't need to teach a cat how to chase mice because it's in his nature. You don't need to teach a child of God how to practice righteousness because it's in his nature. The question is, do we live our human life by the divine life and the divine nature, or do we live our human life by our human life and human nature, which, as we know, are fallen? If the latter is true, then many times we have to deliberately practice something righteous because this is not our habit to do that. It's not our habit to live righteously. But if we live by the divine life with the divine nature, we will habitually live in a righteous way, as an expression of this life and nature that we have received from God. This is a marvelous thing, and this is what God wants to see in the living of all his children.

[MM]: When we enter into this experience, Bob, it takes a lot of the sweating, the straining, the struggling out of the Christian life, and it can become a more spontaneous, normal kind of living.

[BD]: That's right, Matt, and again, we have to emphasize the importance of the fellowship of life, and we're enjoying the fellowship of life. And when the Spirit as the divine ointment is moving in us, then we enjoy the riches of the divine life, and spontaneously, then in our living, we express all the virtues of the divine nature. This is a glory to God.

[MM]: Well, let's go on, Bob. I really enjoy the next verse that we're going to get into. There's a song, actually, about it that I like to sing this song. I don't think we'd better do that right now, but anyway, it's 1 John 3:1, and if you know the song, I think you'll enjoy it also. Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." Here's Witness Lee.

Part 2

[MM]: A great future with splendid blessing, I really enjoy that, Bob. When I read the facts in God's Word from 1 John 3:1, and see this wonderful future that God has for all the children of God, it makes me wonder how I, and all Christians for that matter, could ever be despondent, yet it happens. We are despondent about our future, yet you wonder how it could happen when you realize this. We really need to forget about those thoughts that doubt the future, and really enjoy the fact that God has prepared for us in this wonderful future, don't we?

[BD]: That's right. And the future that we have is wrapped up in the fact that we are the children of God. We have actually been born of God, and the Father has bestowed on us this wonderful love. You know, John says, what manner of love, what manner of love is this that the Father bestowed on us that we would be called the children of God, and we are. That means we have been begotten of God, we have His life, we have His nature, and our future is altogether related to our being the children of God with His life and nature. We get discouraged, of course, when we look at ourselves in the flesh as sons of men, children of men with a fallen nature, sometimes failing, falling down, and so forth. We get discouraged. But when we realize that we have the divine life, we have the divine nature, and this life is growing in us, and when it reaches maturity, we will realize the full blessing that God has prepared for us in our future. And so in verse 2 it says, it has not yet been manifested what we shall

be, but we know that when He is manifested, we will be like Him. This is our future. Our future is to be the same as Jesus Christ, the firstborn Son of God. What a future we have! Who could have a brighter future than the children of God?

[MM]: Wow. This is amazing. In Romans 8 it talks about being conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, and in 2 Peter 1:4 it talks about we are partakers of the divine nature. And I wanted to mention that first because some people say we're not really real sons. We're just adopted sons. And that's why the emphasis over and over, we are begotten of Him. We are born of Him. And we're partakers of His divine nature. We're not just called the sons of God. We are the children of God.

[BD]: Marvelous.

[MM]: Okay, Bob. Let's go on, and I'm going to read verse 9 from chapter 3. This section on practicing the divine righteousness ends in verse 10 of chapter 3. So let me read 9. I think that's a good summary. All the verses are good, but we'll just read that one. "Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God." Here's Witness Lee for the conclusion of today's life-study message.

Part 3

[MM]: Bob, in this light, the fight for the spirit is vital, and the enemy knows it. So, he really attacks this point. Every Christian is familiar with the poison of sin in them that results in the outward sins that we all hate. Yet we also know that when we live by the divine life in our spirit, we don't sin. Seems pretty clear, but Satan really has a way to mix us up, doesn't he?

[BD]: He really does, Matt. He distracts us from the fact that we have the divine life and the divine nature. We have been begotten of God. We have God's seed in our spirit. If we live in our spirit, we will live a life of habitual righteousness, and we will not practice sin habitually, which is lawlessness. This does not mean that we will never commit a sin. Whenever we are not living in our spirit, enjoying the divine life and the fellowship of life, then we have the strong possibility that we will commit some kind of sin. Actually, in our flesh, we are no different from an unbeliever. Our flesh never changes. This is why we have to focus our attention on our divine birth and on the divine seed within us, and all the time pray without ceasing to contact the Lord, to enjoy the fellowship of life, to enjoy the anointing of the Spirit in our spirit. This will cause us to spontaneously be able to live a life of righteousness, a life in which we do not practice sin. Anyone who, after he hears the gospel and believes the gospel, still practices sin and sins habitually, this is his life, like the devil. The devil is a sinner. He sins. He doesn't sin as a kind of an intentional activity. He sins as a habitual way of life. We believers, because we have the divine life and divine nature and divine seed in us, we can't live that way. We may sin occasionally when we are not living in our spirit, but immediately we realize that we have offended the Lord, and we feel we must repent and confess our sins to receive the Lord's forgiveness. Then we can come back to enjoy the fellowship of the divine life again and continue to live a life of righteousness as we live out the divine nature. So, this is a marvelous thing. This shows us the capacity of the divine life that we have received. It is able to keep us from sinning.

[MM]: You know, one thing I want to add before we sign off here today, Bob, is this matter you just brought up about practicing sin. And I think when some people read this verse, it really confuses them, because it says, everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin. Well, there are believers who do sin, but the word practice there means habitually sin. And so, after you're a believer, you may still sin, but it's not a habitual sinning.

And those who are unbelievers, they may actually do righteous things, but they don't do it in an unintentional, habitual way. I think we need to make that distinction, don't we?

[BD]: That's very good, Matt. Very clear.