

Spiritual Living

The First Letter of
John

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Introduction

John 1:1-5

1. Overview
 - We have fellowship with Jesus (John 1:1-5):
 - (1:1-4) Why did John write?
 - (1:5-5:17) What did John write about?
2. So, John writes about *walking* in the light, *abiding* in the truth, *giving* our love to the brethren, *knowing* God intimately, and *living* our faith.
 - (5:18-21) What does John encourage us to do?
3. Discussion:
 - What is fellowship?
 - What does it look like?
 - Philippians 2:1-4
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14
 - Romans 12

Full Joy of Fellowship

1 John 1:1-4

1. The Dangerous Issue
 - By the end of the first century, the first nearly 60 years of the church's life, it faced an enemy even greater than the suffering that came from unbelievers without -- false teachers from within.
 - False teachers among them were denying the gospel teaching that it is a lie by declaring that Jesus was not the Son of God, that he could not be the Son of God, that Jesus could not be God incarnated in the flesh, and that it violated all reason and intelligence to believe he is.
 - The teaching was that all matter is inherently evil, that the human flesh is then evil.
 - This teaching had led to all manner of evil and immoral behavior and expression of the flesh and its natural desires and appetites.
 - Therefore, God could not possibly have become flesh.
 - The real danger of this teaching being in the church -- it will cut us off from God and easily accept immoral sinful living.
 - What we believe -- that *Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh* -- is the heart and soul, the very core of *all* that we believe (Philippians 2:5-8 John 1:1-14).
2. The Truth's Declaration -- *That Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the flesh*:
 - We (I) have witnessed that God was among us as one of us, we have a very personal and intimate knowledge of the person of Jesus (1:1).

- Our testimony is true that we witnessed what we preached and taught that the eternal life (not human life) that was with God did come to live among us all (human life) and we lived with him (we knew him personally and intimately) (1:2)
- The result of this proclamation is that if those who hear it believe it also they will have fellowship with the apostles and all of them will have fellowship with God and Jesus Christ (1:3)
- John is enjoying a delightful and wonderful fellowship with God because he has this fellowship with Jesus and he wants to have that fellowship in common with us; John wants us all to have a common relationship with God, he does not want any of to become cut off from God because we lost or walked away from and do not dwell in a relationship (fellowship) with Christ (1:4).

3. The Lesson's Discussion:

- John declares that if we are in fellowship with God:
 - *We are in fellowship with Light* (1:5-7) God is light and we do not have any relationship with the darkness that is in the world. John teaches that to engage in fellowship with God we walk in this light by regularly confessing our sins, allowing the blood of Jesus Christ to continually cleanse us. Two major roadblocks that hinder our engaging God: falling in love with the world and falling for false teachers.
 - *We are in fellowship with Love* (4:16-18) God is love and we do not have any relationship with the hatred that is in the world. John teaches that to engage in fellowship with God we walk in this love by giving, not talking and taking. One major roadblock that hinders our engaging God: putting conditions on our love.
 - *We are in fellowship with Life* (5:6-12) God is life and we do not have any relationship with the death that is in this world. John teaches that to engage in fellowship with God we walk in this life by possessing the spiritual quality of His Son's life, testimony of our faith, our obedience to God's commandments. One major roadblock that hinders our engaging God: not believing Jesus Christ His Son.
- *Questions 1:*
 - Describe what life is like for one who lives the world's darkness?
 - Describe what life is like for one who lives the world's hate?
 - Describe what life is like for one who lives the world's death?
- *Question 2:*
 - How does God's Light manifest itself in the way we live?
 - How does God's Love manifest itself in the way we live?
 - How does God's Life manifest itself in the way we live?

4. John declares that the *Truth* he declared is the source of this fellowship:

- (1:1-10) the truth faces our sin; it does not deny it because it is in you
- (2:18-23) the truth will protect you from the world's deceptions because It abides in you
- (4:1-6) the truth is the ability to recognize and defeat sin and false truths because it is in you
- (5:6-10) the truth is witnessed by your testimony because it is in you

- Question 1:
→ What is the common thread here?
- Question 2:
→ How does that happen to us?

5 Again: So, John writes to secure them (us) from the threatening dangers to our spiritual state of fellowship with God, Christ, and him (2:12-14).

Fellowship in the Light of God's Truth

1:5-2:29

1. Introduction

- Our fellowship with God is living with Jesus in the light of God's truth, the light of righteousness:
God is light and we do not have any relationship with the darkness that is in the world. John teaches that to engage in fellowship with God we walk in this light by regularly confessing our sins, allowing the blood of Jesus Christ to continually cleanse us. Two major roadblocks that hinder our engaging God: falling in love with the world and falling for false teachers.
- A reminder (John 3:18-21):
→ Why do folks prefer darkness to light?
→ Why do folks prefer light to darkness?

2. Basis for our fellowship (1:5-7)

- The message heard from God and declared to us (what we have told you and you believed):
That God is light and we must walk in that light to have fellowship with God because there is no darkness in God at all. But if we walk in that light, where God is, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all of our sin and so we will have fellowship with all who are walking in the light; we all have a common life.
- The spirit of the text is that this is also a promise:
When we walk in the light of righteousness God is always there, he will always walk with us, and we will be one with God ("My God and I")
- How do we have fellowship with God?
→ By walking in the light
→ By the cleansing of Jesus' blood from all of our sins
→ Therefore, we do walk in darkness
- **Questions:**
→ What does that "common life look like"?
→ How does God's way become the "habit of our lives", become that by which we regulate our lives? When does it fail to do this?
→ Is there any sin that will not be cleansed?
→ What does walking in the darkness look like when one claims to be walking in the light?

3. Roadblock #1 to this fellowship (1:8-2:14)

- Unconfessed sin (1:8-10)

- **Questions:**
 - What is the attitude and character of one who obeys God?
 - What is the behavior?
 - How does a believer's life become a lie?
 - How does that make God a liar?
 - Why does a believer deny his own sin?
 - What should the believer do with his sin?
 - How do we get to that point in our lives that the truth stops living in us?
4. Christ is our redeemer advocate (2:1-2):
- When we confess our sins, we are calling Christ to our side, to our aid, to plead our cause for forgiveness and cleansing and keep our fellowship with God; and Jesus can do this because he is the righteous Christ, who was righteousness in the flesh.
 - Christ is the advocate who redeems us: Christ is God's mercy to each and every one of us, Christ is how God covers all the sins of everyone.
 - **Questions:**
 - Why does God provide us an advocate? What would be the state of our relationship(fellowship) with God if Christ were not our advocate?
 - What all do we truly if we choose to follow error or immorality or disobedience?
5. Expression of our fellowship (2:3-6):
- How we express our relationships are determined by whom that relationship is with and the nature of that relationship; it expresses how well we know each other.
 - We express our fellowship with God by taking care to obey his commandments that we observe to follow Christ's teachings; we express our fellowship with God by knowing him well enough to know what he teaches us to do and understand what he wants (expects) and commit ourselves to do it; we know him intimately.
 - A believer is a liar if the truth is not in him because he does not keep God's commandments; if he does not keep God's commandments, the truth is not in him
6. **Questions:**
- Why do we not hear specific sins identified in lessons and sermons?
 - How do we know God? or How do we "get to know God"?
 - Why is obedience to God's commandments the expression of our fellowship with Him?
 - How do we build a lifelong relationship with God?
7. Test of our fellowship (2:7-11):
- The commandment is old because it has been taught to us by God beginning -- to love one another; yet, the command is new in its sense, scope, and expression -- to hate one's brother (fellow believer) is to walk in darkness and not the light.
 - And such hate is obvious when a believer follows error and sin; if we walk in the light we walk with God and will not bring spiritual harm to

- our brothers; God will not bring spiritual harm to his children.
- But he who hates is blind because he walks in darkness and cannot see the impending consequences of where he is going since he cannot even see where he is going; this is the dangerous state of one who will not follow righteousness but will follow sin.
 - **Questions:**
 - How do we express hate for our brother?
 - What are the dangerous consequences of hating our brother?
8. So, again, John restates his reasons for writing (2:12-14):
- A warning (2:15-17):
 - **Questions:**
 - How does the way of the world, the lust and pride of the world, lead us to hate our brothers?
9. Roadblock #2 to the fellowship (2:18-29)
- False teaching (2:18-23):
 - Therefore, do not be deceived by them (2:24-29):
 - **Questions:**
 - How do we allow the truth to take up permanent residence in us?
 - Could there be an anti-Christ's today?
 - What would they look like? How would they behave?
 - Do we have false teachers today in the church? What are they teaching?
 - How do we know the false teacher from the teacher who follows Christ?

Living the Life as the Children of God

3:1-21

1. We are the children of God (3:1-3)
 - Our fellowship with God makes us (God and I and me and you) a family
 - We do not know what God is in form but we know he is pure; we know that God is not contaminated and defiled by the world
 - **Questions:**
 - Describe the relationship between a father and his children, and between brothers and sisters.
 - What happens when this goes awry?
 - How does God's child keep himself undefiled and uncontaminated from the world to be like God his father?
2. Sin and the children of God (3:4-9)
 - Sin is a contradiction for the children of God, sin is contrary to faith (3:4-6)
3. Questions:
 - At what point does my sin separate me from Christ, cause me to

lose my fellowship with Christ? At what point is a child of God no longer in the light, no longer in Christ?

→ What is the nature and purpose of spiritual growth?

4. God's children live righteously (3:7-9):

- Christ is righteous so all who are in Christ practice righteousness; Being in Christ and in fellowship with the Light takes away the desire to sin and gives us the desire to do (practice) righteousness. We can not be righteous without this.
- A life of sin is a proof of the devil's power and Christ came to destroy that power; it is Christ's work to destroy sin in his disciple's lives, to destroy the devil's power over us. He will sever and loose from us and break us free of the works of the devil.
- So, the child of God cannot go on sinning. The "new creation" that he is now will not seek the sinner's life and does not want it because he wants to follow Christ.
- Questions:
 - How does Christ destroy the power of sin, the works of the devil, in His disciples?
 - Is it possible for that power to reassert itself? Why?
 - What are we to do about it?

5. God's children love each other (3:10-24)

- The imperative of the brethren to love one another (3:10-15)
- Love is evidenced by actions (3:16-18)
- Obedience brings assurance (3:19-24)

6. Questions:

- Is the child of God who hates his brother become a child of the devil?
- Why would I hate my brother?
- How do I hate my brother?
- Why do I love my brother?
- How do I love my brother?
- How will my faith in (believing on) the name of Jesus manifest itself in us?
- How does the spirit of God manifest itself in us

Living the Life of Knowing God

4:1-21

1. Introduction

- Believers are distinguished from unbelievers, the children of God are separated from the world, by the Spirit of God that is in them because they abide in Him and He abides in them.
- John tells us that Spirit of God that is in us is the spirit of His truth and his love; hence, it is a spirit that listens to God's voice and reflects his love.

2. Believer's Know Jesus is the Son of God (4:1-6)

- The children of God do not believe every voice because not every voice is from God (4:1-3)
- Questions:
 - How do we recognize the voice of God? How do we learn that?
 - If the spirit in a false prophet is not from God, then whose spirit is in him?

3. The children of God listen to God because he is the Truth (4:4-6):

- The child of God is one who has been given the power or strength to keep himself from being harmed, influenced, subverted, swayed, or being drawn to the false prophets because it is his Father's power and he has already beaten down the one who is the power and strength of the false prophet -- the power and strength of the world, the devil.
- Now the world will listen to them because he has become one of them. So, why would I even think of listening to any one of them!!! They are not one of God's!!!! The world will listen to them but they will not listen to the apostles of Christ!!!
- **Questions:**
 - How do we get to know God?
 - How do we listen to God?
 - What will we do when we listen to God?
 - What will we do when we listen to the world?

4. Believer's Reflect God's Love (4:7-21)

- We know God by his love (4:7-12)
- Questions:
 - *Why does God love us so much?*
 - *What are the blessings of being loved by God?*
 - *Why would a child of God not love his brethren?*

5. God's Spirit of love (4:13-18):

- Questions:
 - What fear does John say perfect love drives out of us? Why?
 - How does love bind us to God?
- Loving God requires we love God's children, our brethren (4:19-21)
- Question: How does love move among the brethren? How does it make us act toward one another?

The Children of God Are Victorious

5:1-21

1. Introduction

- John has shown us that the redeemed and forgiven have a fellowship with God that cannot be found or matched by anything of the world that the world has to offer. That fellowship -- we are God's children.
- John shows us that God is the light, the truth, the love
- John has shown us several characteristics of the children of God and the life that they live with God:
 1. Our redemption and continuous forgiveness in our salvation by God's only begotten Son (1:5-7, 2:1-2, 3:1-3, 4:7-11, 5:11-13).
 2. The children of God confess their sin (1:7-10).
 3. The children of God live in the light of God as it lives in them (1:1-7).
 4. The children of God live in His truth and it lives in them (2:18-27).
 5. The children of God live in righteousness as it lives in them (3:4-9).
 6. The children of God live in love for the brethren as it lives in them (3:10-18).
 7. The children of God live in love for God as his love for them lives in them (4:7-11).
 8. The children of God live in victorious faith as it lives in them (5:1-5).
 9. The children of God live in assurance of their hope (5:11-13).
- These are the characteristics that distinguish us from the children of the world.
- A thought: What violates these does not fit in the believer's life. They are harmful to the Christian because they will cut him off from God their father. Christ's disciples we will no longer follow their Master and Teacher. This state will require repentance and restoration for cleansing by our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Our Faith Is Victorious (5:1-5)

- Loving God requires loving God's children and obeying God's commandments.
- Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a born a child of God (Is that not why Jesus came?). Anyone who loves God also loves all of God's children.
- The testimony that you love God's children is that we love God and show that love for God by keeping His commandments. Christ has taught us that His teachings and God's law teach us how to love God, to love His children, and to love our neighbor and enemy (Matthew 22:34-40).
- "keep His commandments" → to watch over and follow or obey God's precepts and principles, laws and teachings.
- Why?
 - (Verse 3) → Loving God is about keeping His commandments and those commandments not a weight that hangs around our neck or a heavy ball and chain around our feet (although we can make it so).
 - (Verse 4-5) → God's children can prevail against the world and our faith is our victory because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We do not surrender to the world, that we can resist the pressures brought on us by the world and by any of God's children who would

lead us away from Christ in their teaching and practice. As our conviction of Christ grows stronger the power of the world (or a love for the world) grows weaker and weaker to us. So, our love for God becomes the power and will for our lives.

3. The Testimony of God (5:6-13)

- Faith in Jesus Christ (to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God) is our great victory to overcome the world because it is ***faith in Jesus Christ***.
- Now, there are three in Heaven who bear witness of this testimony to Jesus (7):
 1. the Father → God (Mat.1:21-23, 3:13-17, 17:1-13)
 2. the Word → Jesus (Jno.1:1-18)
 3. the Spirit → Holy Spirit (Jno.14-26)
 4. These three agree → any claim from any one of these that does not agree with the other two is a lie and not the truth about Jesus because these three proclaim the same truth.
- Now, there are three on earth who bear witness of the testimony to Jesus (8):
 1. the Spirit → Manifest (Jno.1:31, Eph.1:13-14)
 2. the water → Baptism (Jno.1:31, Ro.6:1-4)
 3. the blood → Death (Jno. 19:34, Mat.27:45-54)
 4. These three agree → any other testimony is not truth for it is from the world.
- There is also the witness of the believer's life of the testimony to Jesus (10-12):
 1. The believer's witness is his faith, the living effects of that faith in the person and life of the child of God (10).
 2. The testimony of the believer is that God has given his children eternal life and that this life is in His Son; therefore, if I have the Son of God I have life and if I do not have the Son I do not have life (11-12).
 3. So, the child of God *knows* that we have eternal life (see the tests given in the letter) and we may continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ and not be swayed by sin and error, the lust and pride of the world.

4. Confidence and Compassion In Prayer (5:14-17)

- God ***will*** answer the prayers of His children! Our Father will ***always*** listen to His children and he will respond. Only restriction is that what we ask does not violate what he wants for all His children and for you personally.
- According the context of the letter, the "sin unto death" is the sinful act of a child of God who no longer wants to be a child of God, the child of God who no longer believes Jesus Christ, who does not want to practice righteousness as a way of life -- all of which such a one will not confess his sin for cleansing.
- According to the context of the letter, the "sin not unto death" is the sin that is confessed. His prayers will be answered and prayers for him will be answered.

5. Knowing the True & Rejecting the False (5:18-21)

- The wicked one will not touch the child of God because the child of God is alert to the presence of sin and only seeks (wants) to be righteous, seeks or wants what God does for him. He is not affected by the power of the world.

- We know who (whose) we are -- that we are God's child and that the world is gripped by the sway of the world's power. We simply do not want anything to do with the world because we don't belong to the world!
- So we have nothing to do with anything that would pull us away from our father and lead us away from His Son, such as idols. There is only one true and living God and He is our Father. We have no need or desire for anything else.