

Introduction

We just finished up the Gospel of John, and now we are going to be studying the three letters of John. I had never preached through the Gospel of John and I learned so much while studying it. I wish that I had studied and preached through it earlier in my ministry. There is a familiar saying, “You really don’t know what you don’t know.”, and I believe that is very true. I didn’t know how much I didn’t know about Jesus’ ministry until I studied John. I had preached through Luke and Mark, which are part of the three synoptic gospels, but when I went through John and tried to tie it all together, God opened my eyes and gave me a better understanding.

I have found that we get some revelation when we read or hear the Word of God. We get more revelation, understanding, insights, and applications when we meditate on the Word of God. When we study the Word of God, we gain even more understanding. I have never preached through the letters of John, so I am looking forward to learning and gaining more understanding.

J. Vernon McGee said that as he began his ministry in each of his four churches that he served in his forty years of pastoring, he would start with a study of 1 John. He was convinced that “this epistle is more important for believers in the church than the church epistles.”¹ As we begin this very important book of the Bible, I invite you to study along with me, and my prayer is that all of us will learn in grown in our walk with the Lord.

In this first message, I am going to give an introduction to the book. Second, we will look at the fellowship that we can have with the Incarnate Word. Third, we will look at the fellowship we can have with God the Light.

Fellowship with God

1. Introduction to 1 John
2. Fellowship with the Incarnate Word
3. Fellowship with the God the Light

1. Introduction to 1 John (1 Jn 1:3, 1:4, 2:11, 5:13)

a. Author

As the name of the epistle states, this letter was written by the Apostle John. Nowhere in the book does John state that he is the author. However, there is both internal evidence and external evidence to prove that John was the author. When the author describes what he had heard, seen, and touched, and is now proclaiming, he was undoubtedly one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Scholars can easily eliminate the other apostles, leaving it to be John.

Second, the style is also consistent with the Gospel of John. His language, choice of words, and topics all indicate that John is the author.

Third, he begins this letter in a very similar way to the Gospel of John. In John 1:1, he wrote, “In the beginning was the Word...” He begins this letter “What was from the beginning...” There are three places in the Bible that speak about the beginning: Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, and 1 John 1:1.

¹ J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Volume 5, page 755.

Fourth, the church leaders and historians at that time state that John was the author. Two of John's pupils, Polycarp and Papias, told Irenaeus that John had written it, and he states that in his writings. Origen was another church father at that time, and he said, "John, beside the Gospel and Revelation, has left an epistle of a few lines..."² The early church fathers all believed that John was the author, and its authenticity was never questioned, so it was placed into the New Testament canon without any hesitation.

b. John's life

We do not know the exact date that John was born or died, but it is estimated that he was born between AD 6 and AD10. He was the youngest of the apostles of the Lamb. He is identified as the son of Zebedee in Mark 1:19.

(Mk 1:19) "Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets."

John's mother was Salome. In Matthew 27:26, the mother of the sons of Zebedee is mentioned as looking on at the crucifixion from a distance. In Mark 15:40-41, a parallel account, the exact same women are listed, but her name is mentioned rather than saying the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Salome was one of the women who followed Jesus and ministered to him. She was also the one that asked Jesus if her sons could sit at His right hand in the kingdom.

(Mk 15:40–41) "There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. {41} When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

(Mt 27:55–56) "Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. {56} Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee."

John had a brother named, James, and I believe they were very close. They worked together, and the two of them are frequently mentioned together. Some scholars say that James was the older of the two, and other scholars state that John was the youngest.

John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist before becoming disciples of Jesus. The two of them were with John the Baptist when Jesus came to be baptized. They embraced John's preaching of repentance and preparation for the Messiah. They probably assisted John the Baptist in baptizing the multitudes that came and responded to his message of repentance. They heard him proclaim, "Behold, the Lamb of God." After John the Baptist had declared that, Andrew and John began following Jesus.

(Jn 1:29) "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Mark records that when Jesus began His ministry, He went along the Sea of Galilee. After calling Simon and Andrew, He saw James and John, who were mending their nets in a boat with their father and hired servants. They immediately left their father in the boat with the hired

² Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes, Hebrews to Jude, page 272.

servants and followed Jesus. We gather lots of information about them in this brief introduction. They were fishermen, living by the Sea of Galilee, and they were fairly well off, as they had hired servants helping them. They worked together, and remained together in ministry, so they were close friends, not just brothers. Fishing was hard physical work, so they were probably very strong men.

(Mk 1:19–20) “Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. {20} Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.”

In Luke’s account, we find that Peter and Andrew were partners with James and John. These four apostles worked and partnered together as fishermen, and then in ministry with Jesus. Andrew and Peter were from Bethsaida, and it is likely that James and John also lived in Bethsaida. Some scholars believe they were from Capernaum, and that is a possibility, and it is only six miles away from Bethsaida.

(Lk 5:10) “and so also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

(Jn 1:44) “Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.”

When Jesus appointed the twelve apostles, he gave these two brothers the nickname, Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder.” The Greek word, Boanerges (Strong’s G993) comes from Hebrew and actually means sons of violent rage or anger. These two brothers were not meek, but were strong fishermen with a hot temperament.

(Mk 3:16–17) “And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), {17} and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”);

Generally, when we think about John, we think about the special relationship that John had with Jesus, not someone with a fiery temperament. We think about how he was the one that Jesus loved. Jesus loves everyone, but He had a special love for John. We don’t think about a man with a thunderous temper. We think about a man who was loved and full of love. In John 15, John wrote about Jesus’ new command to love one another. In the book of 1 John, he references that new commandment, and he puts a strong emphasis on love. He speaks about how great a love the Father has given to us, and how true disciples will love their brother.

(Jn 13:34–35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We also think of John as one who loved truth. In John 8, he wrote that Jesus said that His disciples would know the truth and the truth would set them free.

(Jn 8:31–32) “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

In his letters, he wrote to the chosen lady and her children, i.e., the church, that he loved in truth, and it was for the sake of the truth. He also said that he had no greater joy than to hear of his children walking in truth. John loved truth. John was an apostle that was full of love and truth, a wonderful and powerful combination of qualities.

(2 Jn 1–2) “The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, {2} for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.”

(3 Jn 3–4) “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. {4} I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

Peter, James, and John were part of the inner circle of the apostles. Only these three were with Jesus for the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2), the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mk 5:22-37), and Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to being arrested (Mk 14:32-33). Jesus trusted John, and when Jesus was on the cross, He saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, and He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to John, “Behold, your mother!” Even though Jesus had four brothers, he did not assign the care of His mother to the oldest, which would be customary, or to any of the others.³ He tasked John with caring for His mother, and “from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.” Jesus trusted John and knew that he would take care of his mother and the rest of his family.

(Jn 19:26–27) “When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” {27} Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*.”

c. Date of book

After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, all the apostles were living in Jerusalem for a season. At some point, John moved to Ephesus, where he lived until he was sent to the Island of Patmos in a prisoner camp. It was at Patmos that he received and wrote book of Revelations. There is much historical evidence that John returned to Ephesus after being released from Patmos. He died somewhere around AD 98-100. One church father wrote that John had become so old and physically worn down that he had to be carried into the church services. I am appreciative of the commitment to not forsake the assembling of the saints, and the effort that he made not to miss, but to be a part of those services.

The majority of scholars place the writing of John between AD 85-90. They believe 1 John was written sometime between AD 90-95. “The message of 1 John seems to presuppose a knowledge of the Gospel, and since there is no mention of the persecution under Domitian in 95, the First Epistle was probably written about A.D. 90.”⁴ There is reliable evidence that all four books were written from Ephesus, where John was residing.

| Dates of John’s Writings | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Gospel of John | AD 85-90 |
| 1 John | AD 90-95 |
| 2 John | AD 90-100 |
| 3 John | AD 90-100 |

³ Jesus’ four brothers: James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. See Mk 6:3.

⁴ The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Moody Press, page 1465.

d. Purpose of writing

1. Stated purposes

There are stated purposes for John writing this book, and then there is an unstated, underlying purpose for writing the book. The first stated purpose is found in verse three. It was for believers to have fellowship with other believers, and with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. He wrote, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

| Purpose of 1 John | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1. To have Fellowship | 1 Jn 1:3 |
| 2. To have Joy | 1 Jn 1:4 |
| 3. Not to Sin | 1 Jn 2:1 |
| 4. Assurance of salvation | 1 Jn 5:13 |

(1 Jn 1:3) “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The second stated purpose is for the believers to have joy. The KJV states in verse four “these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” The NASB, ESV, and NIV all state, “so that our joy may be complete.”

(1 Jn 1:4) “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

The third stated purpose is found in 1 Jn 2:1. It was for believers not to sin.

(1 Jn 2:1) “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;”

The fourth stated purpose is found in 1 Jn 5:13. It was for believers, those who believe in the name of the Son of God, to know that they have eternal life. John did not want people questioning whether or not they were going to be saved. Throughout the book of John, he gives numerous signs and characteristics of a true believer. He contrasts the lives of unbelievers with believers to make it clear. Depending on how one categorized and groups things together, there are ten to twelve characteristics of true believers. In the prior verse, he gave just one of those signs; “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

(1 Jn 5:12–13) “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

2. Unstated Purpose

John wrote this to refute the false teachings that were infiltrating the churches. At that time, there were many different false teachings that were causing havoc among believers. We know that Paul addressed the Judaizers in his letters, who wanted to bring people back under the Law. They tried to make the Gentiles get circumcised, observe the various feasts, and other laws. John does not address the Judaizers, but he focused on some of the other groups. The most prominent attack was from Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a broad system of beliefs that held a few common beliefs. One, they believed that the spiritual world was pure and the material world was corrupt. Second, they believed that salvation came through a secret knowledge or revelation, rather than by faith. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word, gnosis, which means knowledge. Third, they believed that Jesus was not God in the flesh, because God could not come into sinful flesh. Fourth, they believed that Jesus came to bring knowledge, but not to redeem man from his sins. Fifth, they believed there was a higher god than the god who created the heavens and earth.

Out of Gnosticism, there was a branch called Docetism. Docetism comes from the Greek word, dokein, which means to seem. They taught that Jesus only appeared to have a physical body. The Spirit came on him at his baptism and left him before his crucifixion. They held strongly the view that Jesus had not come in the flesh, since it was evil.

There were two extreme responses from people following Gnosticism. On one extreme, there was ascetism. They tried to minimize the evil in their flesh. They did this by strict self-denial of food, drink, marriage, and other pleasures. They separated themselves from others.

On the other extreme was antinomianism, which said that moral laws no longer apply to the spiritual person. Therefore, physical behavior is spiritually unimportant, and one could indulge in physical desires freely.

John confronts these various teachings in this book. He begins right off the bat by saying that Jesus is the Son of God, and was in the beginning. He said that they saw, touched, and felt Jesus. He was not just a spirit, but was God in the flesh. John said we could have fellowship with God. John teaches about sin and how it affects fellowship with God. He came against the idea that believers could live anyway they pleased. He said that there are obvious differences between a believer and an unbeliever. He taught that the way a person was saved was through a relationship with God.

Throughout the book of John, he is confronting these false teachings. Even though John does not state that confronting these false teachings was the purpose, it was clearly the unstated purpose of the book. It is a letter contending for the faith of believers.

2. Fellowship with the Incarnate Word (1 Jn 1:1-4)

John does not open the letter with a salutation like other letters. (He also does not conclude with a salutation at the end.) Instead, he starts with the beginning, just as he did in the Gospel of John. He said, “What was from the beginning.”

(1 Jn 1:1–4) “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— {2} and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— {3} what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. {4} These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

There are three primary places that talk about the beginning: Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, and 1 John 1:1. There is certainly a reason for starting with the beginning. In Genesis, it was God who created the heavens and the earth. In John 1, the Word was in the beginning, and the Word was

with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him, nothing came into being that has come into being.” John is laying the foundation that Jesus is God, and that He came in the flesh. Right from the start he is combatting the Gnostics who deny that Jesus came in the flesh, and deny His deity.

(1 Jn 1:1a) “What was from the beginning...”

(Ge 1:1) “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

(Jn 1:1–3) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

John said that what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life, which was manifested to them. John saw and is testifying of what he saw, heard, and touched. These are physical senses that experienced God in the flesh. John testifies and proclaims to them the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. He is confronting Docetism, who believe that Jesus was only a Spirit, not God in the flesh. He saw Jesus, heard Jesus, touched Jesus, and he is testifying that Jesus is God in the flesh, the Incarnate God. The Gnostics said that God could not come in the flesh because all flesh is evil, and John was refuting that false teaching.

(1 Jn 1:1-2) “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— {2} and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—”

Just as John did in John 1, where He said that in Jesus was life, and the Life was the Light of men, he calls Jesus the Word of Life. Our salvation, our eternal life, is in Jesus, the Word of Life. Jesus was God in the flesh, not just a Spirit.

(Jn 1:4) “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”

Then, John tells why he was proclaiming these things to them; it was so that they could have fellowship with them and their fellowship is with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. We can have fellowship with God. God created us to have fellowship with Him, and through Jesus, we can have fellowship with God. This is a wonderful truth and promise.

(1 Jn 1:3) “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

This was also a rebuttal of the Gnostic belief that salvation was a special knowledge that only some had through a revelation. John invites all of the believers to have fellowship with Him, with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. It was available to all, not just a select few through some special revelation.

Next John said, “we write, so that our joy may be made complete.” We do not know who “we” refers to. Because John said, “what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we

have looked at and touched with our hands... and we have seen and testify...”, he is most likely referring to the apostles. Jesus appeared to them and had them touch His hands and His side. Jesus did not appear to everyone after being raised from the dead, but He did appear to the apostles.

(1 Jn 1:4) “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

(1 Jn 1:4 KJV) “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

The KJV reads “that your joy may be made complete.” The ESV, NASB, and NIV all say “our joy.” When we have fellowship with the Lord, it produces joy in our lives. When other people join us in fellowshiping with the Father, it produces joy in their lives and our lives. In the presence of God is fullness of joy. The second fruit of the Spirit is joy, and in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is joy. Our fellowship with God brings a fullness of joy.

(Ps 16:11) “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

(Ga 5:22) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”

In chapter two, John refers to his readers as “my little children.” He is in the role of a spiritual father, and these are his spiritual children. A father has great joy in seeing his children walk with God, and to walk in truth. In 3 John 4, he wrote, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear my children walking in the truth.” As a father I concur; Karen and I have great joy when we hear or see that our children are following God and walking in truth.

(3 Jn 4) “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

Paul was also a spiritual father, and in Philippians 2, he wrote, “make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” A fullness of joy, a completeness of joy would come from seeing them walking in truth and being united together. John was going to have a complete joy when he heard that they fellowshiped with them and with God.

(Php 2:1–2) “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, {2} make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”

The emphasis of this first section is Jesus came as the Incarnate Christ. He was both flesh and spirit, and the apostles saw, heard, and touched Him. They were now proclaiming to the churches in Asia that they could fellowship with them and with God through Jesus, the Word of Life, the Son of God.

3. Fellowship with God the Light (1 Jn 1:5-10)

John’s first emphasis is that Jesus is the Incarnate God that we can have fellowship with. His second point is that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we are going to fellowship with God, who is Light, we must walk in the light.

(1 Jn 1:5-10) “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. {6} If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; {7} but if we walk 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. {8} If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. {10} If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

John begins by saying, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Light stands for holiness, righteousness, and purity, and John contrasts this with darkness, which represents evil and sin. The Gnostics believed that the god who created the earth was a lower god, and there was a higher god over him, who was unknowable. Since matter was evil, this lower god who created this corrupt, material world, could not be the supreme god. John is proclaiming that the God who created all things in the beginning became flesh, and that He is the Light, and in Him there is no darkness. He is not an inferior God; He is pure, holy, and righteous; He is the Light.

(1 Jn 1:5) “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

Where did John hear this? In John 1:4-9, he wrote that “in Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. John the Baptist came as a witness to testify about the Light. John and Andrew had been disciples of John the Baptist, and had heard this message from him.

(Jn 1:4–9) “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. {5} The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. {6} There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. {8} He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. {9} There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”

John also heard Jesus proclaim that He is the Light. Jesus had spoken to the disciples numerous times over the three years that He was the Light. In John 8, Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

(Jn 8:12) “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

Then John connected the fellowship we have with God with Light and darkness. He said, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk 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.” A condition of fellowship with God is that we must walk in the light. We cannot experience fellowship with God when we are walking in darkness or sin. We cannot fellowship with God when we do not practice the truth.

(1 Jn 1:6–7) “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; {7} but if we walk 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.”

Many people believe they can live their lives however they want, and be good with God. They are deceived. If we want true fellowship with God, we must repent of our sins and walk in the light. If we are following Jesus, we will walk in the Light, as He Himself is in the Light. Jesus will never lead us into darkness, so if we are truly following Him, we will walk in the Light.

Going to church on Sunday does not constitute walking in the light. We cannot live in darkness during the week and then go to church on Sunday and think we are walking in the light. We walk in the light seven days a week, following Jesus throughout each day.

Consider what God tells us in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” How can we have fellowship with God if He is not hearing or listening to us? Who does God look at? Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that the pure in heart are blessed because they will see God.

(Ps 66:18) “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;”

(Mt 5:8) “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

When we walk in the Light, we not only have fellowship with God, but we have fellowship with one another. If we are truly walking with God, we will want to be in church, because the church is the people of God. We will want to be with other believers because that is what we do when we are walking in the Light; we fellowship with one another.

Then John wrote, “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Walking in the Light does not mean that we don’t sin; it means that we do not walk in sin. All of us sin, but sin is not to characterize our life. God has made provision for our sins. Jesus paid the price for our sins. His one-time sacrifice paid for all our sins, past, present, and future. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin.

(1 Jn 1:7-9) “... and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. {8} If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

John goes on, saying, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we sin, we simply need to confess our sins, and God forgives us and cleanses us from our sins. When David confessed his sin to God, he prayed that God would purify him with hyssop, so that he would be clean. He said, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” In the Old Testament, the priest would dip the hyssop branch with blood and sprinkle it on the unclean person (leper, Leviticus 14), and the priest would declare him clean. It is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

(Ps 51:7) “Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Then John said, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us.” We have all sinned. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:20, “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.” We have all sinned, so we cannot say that “we have not sinned.”

(1 Jn 1:10) “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

(Ro 3:23) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

(Ec 7:20) “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins.”

Why does John spend time focusing on sin? There are several reasons. First, sin breaks our fellowship with God, and God wants us to have fellowship with Him. He is giving one of the conditions of fellowship; we must walk in the Light, not in darkness.

Second, God knew that we were all going to sin, so He provided a perfect sacrifice for our sins, the blood of Jesus, which cleanses us from all sin. When we come to Christ, and receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, He forgives us and cleanses us from all sin.

Third, God knew that we would continue to sin, and would need ongoing forgiveness and cleansing. So, Christ paid the one-time sacrifice for all our sins, but we still need to confess or agree with God that we have sinned. When we were in Campus Crusade, they called this “Spiritual Breathing.” When we are walking with God, we will confess our sins to Him, and receive His forgiveness and cleansing, so we can continue having fellowship with Him.

The fourth reason for writing about sin is to refute the Gnostics. The Gnostics did not connect the spiritual with the fleshly life; these were separate and unrelated. John connects our spiritual life with our flesh. For us to have fellowship, we must be walking in the Light. We must deal with our sins and be cleansed from our sins, and need cleansing on an ongoing basis from our sins. The Gnostics did not believe that life in the flesh could ever be in the Light, since the material world was evil. The camp that became part of Antinomianism, said that you could indulge in whatever fleshly pursuits you wanted and it was not sin. They denied being sinners. John refutes this, saying, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and his Word is not in us.”

Conclusion and Applications

God wants to have fellowship with all of us. In the beginning, God created man, and He created us to have fellowship with Him. We were not originally born in sin; we were born having fellowship with God. Unfortunately, Adam sinned, bringing sin into the world. Jesus, the Word of Life, came as the Incarnate God, God in the flesh. John and the apostles heard Jesus. They saw Jesus. They touched Jesus. The fullness of deity dwelt in Jesus, and yet He was fully man. He was both Spirit and flesh. He manifested Himself to us so that we could have fellowship with Him.

God is Light; He is pure, righteous, and holy, and there is no darkness in God. If we are going to have fellowship with God, we must receive His payment for our sins; it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin. If we are going to fellowship with God, we must walk in the Light. When we walk in the Light, we have fellowship with God and with one another. If we say we have no sin, and have not sinned, we lie and the truth is not in us. When we own up to our sins, and confess them to God, He forgives us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He forgives and cleanses us so that we can continue to have fellowship with Him.

Our first application is to receive Jesus and be cleansed from your sin. Have you received Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior? Have you received His payment for your sins? If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead, you simply need to ask Him to come into your life, and to confess Him as your Lord. That means to make Him the Master of your life, giving up control to Him. If you would like to receive Christ this morning so that you can have fellowship with God, simply pray and tell Him that you want to receive Him. You might pray something like this, or with me,

Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that You were sent by the Father, and are the Son of God. I believe that You came and died for our sins, and were raised on the third day. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. Forgive and cleanse me. I turn over my life to You, and confess You as My Lord and Savior. Help me to walk in the Light and to have fellowship with You. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our second application is to make a commitment to fellowship with God. God wants you and I to fellowship with Him. Are you fellowshiping with Him? Are you talking to Him? Are you reading His Word every day? Are you spending time worshipping Him? How is your fellowship with Him? If you are not, ask the Lord to forgive you for not fellowshiping with Him. Make a commitment today to begin spending time with Him, reading His Word and praying. Find a good Bible reading-plan, and read every day. There are a number of daily reading plans on our church website: www.connectionchurch.org/connection-tools/bible-reading-plans.

Our third application is to walk in the Light. Is there anything that may be blocking your fellowship with God. Are you walking in the Light, just as Jesus is in the Light? Is there an area of darkness or sin that you have not repented of? God wants you to have fellowship with Him, and He wants you to confess and forsake that sin so that you can walk with Him in the Light. I encourage you to pray and confess your sin to the Lord. Ask Him to help you walk in the Light. Ask a brother or sister in Christ to help you walk in the Light? Don't put it off. If the Holy Spirit is convicting you of sin today, confess it and be forgiven and cleansed.

Our fourth application is to make a commitment to fellowship with other believers in a local church. Are you a member of a local church? Are you faithfully attending and serving in the local church? Are you fellowshiping with the other believers? If not, I encourage you to find a local church and become a functioning member of that church. Make a commitment to fellowship with other believers. If you are truly walking in the Light, you will fellowship with God and with other believers. If you live in the Rome, Georgia area, we would love to have you come and fellowship with us.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for John and his letter to all of us. Thank You for John's boldness in confronting false teachings, and contending for truth. Jesus, thank You for Your payment for our sins, and for cleansing us from our sins with Your blood. Thank You for continuing to forgive and cleanse us as we confess our sins to You. Father, help us to walk in the Light. We want to have fellowship with You and with one another, so help us to walk in the Light. Help us to spend time in Your word, and to take time praying to You. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Why was John's letter so important at the time he wrote it?
- Why is John's letter still relevant and important to us today?
- What are the things that keep you from fellowshiping with God?
- What are the things that keep you from fellowshiping with other believers?
- Why did their fellowship bring complete joy to John and the other apostles?
- Have you met those who say they have no sin?
- Have you met with those who act like they have no sin?
- What does it mean to confess our sins?
- If Jesus cleansed us from all sin, why do we need to continue confessing our sins to Him.
- What is the difference between being forgiven and being cleansed?

Fellowship With God

Introduction

1. **Introduction to 1 John** (1 Jn 1:3, 1:4, 2:11, 5:13)
 - a. Author (Ge 1:1, Jn 1:1, 1 Jn 1:1)
 - b. John's life (Mk 1:19, 15:40–41, Mt 27:55-56, Jn 1:29, Mk 1:19–20, Lk 5:10, Jn 1:44, Mk 3:16-17, Jn 13:34–35, 8:31-32, 2 Jn 1:2, 3 Jn 3:4, Jn 19:26–27)
 - c. Date of book
 - d. Purpose of writing
 1. Stated purposes (1 Jn 1:3, 1:4, 2:1, 5:12-13)
 2. Unstated Purpose
2. **Fellowship with the Incarnate Word** (1 Jn 1:1-4, Ge 1:1, Jn 1:1-3, Ps 16:11, Ga 5:22, 3 Jn 4, Php 2:1-2)
3. **Fellowship with God the Light** (1 Jn 1:5-10, Jn 1:4-9, 8:12, Ps 66:18, Mt 5:8, Ps 51:7, Ro 3:23, Ec 7:20)

Conclusion and Applications

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.