



(Book outline from *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*)

**Part One: The Basis of Fellowship (1:1-2:27)**

- I. Introduction 1:1-4**
- II. The Conditions for Fellowship 1:5-2:14**
  - A. Walk in the Light 1:5-7
  - B. Confession of Sin 1:8-2:2
  - C. Obedience to His Commandments 2:3-6
  - D. Love for One Another 2:7-14
- III. The Cautions to Fellowship 2:15-27**
  - A. Love of the World 2:15-17
  - B. Spirit of the Antichrist 2:18-27

**Part Two: The Behavior of Fellowship (2:28-5:21)**

- I. Characteristics of Fellowship 2:28-5:3**
  - A. Purity of Life 2:28-3:3
  - B. Practice of Righteousness 3:4-12
  - C. Love in Deed and Truth 3:13-24
  - D. Testing the Spirits 4:1-6
  - E. Love as Christ Loved 4:7-5:3
- II. Consequences of Fellowship 5:4-21**
  - A. Victory over the World 5:4-5
  - B. Assurance of Salvation 5:6-13
  - C. Guidance in Prayer 5:14-17
  - D. Freedom from Habitual Sin 5:18-21



**SOLID CREDENTIALS AND A SUPREME PURPOSE**

1 John 1:1-3

**Intro:** Today I am beginning a series on the first epistle of John. It has always been an epistle which has brought great blessing to the people of God. While the Apostle John did not attach his name to this letter, there really has not been any significant opposition to the idea that the Apostle John wrote this epistle, and the two shorter epistles which follow this in our Bibles, as well as the Gospel which bears the name of this "disciple whom Jesus loved," as he modestly referred to himself in John 20:2; 21:7, 20. I say modestly because John seems never to have gotten over the fact that the Lord Jesus loved him.

It is thought by many that John wrote this epistle from Ephesus, but there is nothing in the epistle which would identify it with Ephesus, nor with any of the other cities where the Lord's work had been established. And so this is generally listed as one of the General Epistles, that is, not meant for any particular group, but for all of the people of God wherever they might be.

Our conception of the Apostle John in Scripture is that he was one who was very devoted to the Lord, and his words in this epistle speak in the most loving way not only of the Lord, but also of those who are the Lord's people. But let me remind you that the Apostle John was not always the kind of man that he became under the blessing of God. In Mark's account of the men the Lord called to be His disciples, and then apostles, He tells us that he called Simon whom He surnamed Peter. And then we read this in Mark 3:17:

And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

This suggests, according to Thayer, that they had fiery dispositions which inclined them to be destructive in their zeal in support of the Lord. On one occasion John found a man casting out demons in the Lord's Name, and he told him to stop doing it because he was not one of those who was accompanying the Lord. But the Lord rebuked John, and told him not to forbid the man.

And then Luke gives us this account in the life of James and John:

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went,

and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village (Luke 9:51-56).

This was years later when John wrote these epistles (which were very likely the last books of the Bible to be written), and we see in them that the Lord had made great changes in John's heart.

*This is truly a family epistle.* While in our translation of this epistle we have the word "sons" twice (in 3:1 and 2), yet John never used the Greek word for *sons* in this epistle when referring to the Lord's people. He always spoke of them as "children" or "little children." The Greek words are τέκνον, or τεκνίον, or παιδίον -- the latter two being *terms of endearment*. He reserved the Greek word for *son* (υἱός) for our Lord Jesus Christ (beginning with chapter 1, verse 3. There doesn't appear to be any reason why he wouldn't speak of the Lord's people as *sons*, because John certainly did. About the only thing we can say is that the Apostle John was an old man at the time that he wrote this epistle, and he affectionately referred to the Lord's people as "little children." And it is good for us to apply this term humbly to ourselves. We are God's *born ones*, and, as such, are members of His family. What a wonderful and amazing truth this is! The last thing any of us could possibly expect in our relationship to God would be that He would bring us into His family. *But that is exactly what He has done!*

Various expositors have emphasized different points which the Apostle John made in the epistle, and there is always some basis for what they have pointed out. It is true, for example, that John wrote to assure believers of their salvation. And we have 1 John 5:13 in proof of that. (Read.) I have stressed that point myself in the past.

But my present understanding of the epistle leads me to say that the primary theme of the epistle was *fellowship*. See 1:3. But to assure his readers, past and present, that they were proper candidates for fellowship with the Lord, John spent much of his efforts in writing this letter upon

the marks of a true child of God. And so it is all tied together in a very wonderful way, and we have in 1 John an epistle of tremendous importance for every child of God. *Let me suggest that you read this epistle over and over until the message grips your own heart.* That is the best way to determine what John had in mind when He wrote this epistle so long ago.

In the subject that I have chosen for my message today, **Solid Credentials and A Supreme Purpose**, I have tried to indicate the main points which John brought out in the first three verses of chapter 1. We should ask ourselves, *What right did the Apostle John have to write such an important epistle as this?* This is what I mean by his **Solid Credentials**. He could have said that he was an apostle, as Paul and Peter usually did, and that would have been enough. But John took another way, and let us remember that he was not only beginning his epistle the way he wanted to, but the Holy Spirit was guiding him in what he did.

## **I. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S SOLID CREDENTIALS (1 John 1:1, 2).**

When I speak of his *credentials*, I am speaking of his right, or his authority, to write so positively on behalf of God and Christ, and the Christian's fellowship with Them.

Speaking of credentials, yesterday Lucille and I were watching the news on TV, and suddenly a young lady appeared who was talking about Jesus Christ, and how people could know Him, and receive great benefits from Him. And then she held up a book which she offered to send to everyone free who would call in and ask for it. Do you know what the book was? It was *The Book of Mormon*. She indicated that her book would help us to understand the message of the Bible. But what right did she have to say that that particular book was the book to have if you want to understand the Bible? Most people have trouble understanding the Bible, and thousands will probably take advantage of that offer. But how do we know that *The Book of Mormon* is the book that will help us? The answer: We don't know it. In fact, what we do know is that *The Book of Mormon* teaches many things that are not only not in the Bible, but are contrary to the Bible.

But here in 1 John, in the Bible itself, we see the credentials of the writer, credentials which were given to him by God and a message that was safeguarded by the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

Notice these statements in verse 1:

- 1) "Which we have heard."
- 2) "Which we have seen with our eyes."
- 3) "Which we have looked upon."
- 4) "And our hands have handled of the Word of life."

And then go on to verse 2. At the beginning of the verse, and again at the end of the verse, John said that "the life was manifested unto us."

And even in verse 3 as he went on to say why he was writing, he began the verse by saying, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

Who was John writing about? He called whoever it was, "the Word of life" (v. 1) and "eternal life" in verse 2. And he spoke of Him as "with the Father." The only one he could possibly have been speaking about was the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, if you compare the beginning of the Gospel of John with the beginning of this epistle, you will not only have evidence that they were written *by* the same person, the Apostle John, but that they were written *about* the same Person, the Lord Jesus Christ!

So we are reading an epistle written by one who was a personal acquaintance of Jesus Christ. The fact that John said "we" throughout this passage may be what we call *an editorial* "we," or it more likely that he was indicating that what he was declaring here was not only true of himself, but it was true of many others who had the same opportunity to see and hear the Lord that he had had.

Look at verse 1 again. He was speaking of One Who was "from the beginning." This means that He was no mere man, but an eternal Person, which means that He had to be Deity. Cf. John 1:1, 2.

John said he had "heard" him. Oh, yes, he had heard Him -- many, many times, and you can examine the record of what this divine Person said if you will only read the Gospel of John.

Then he said that he had "seen him with our eyes." It was not a vision, nor an optical illusion, not just John's imagination. But with his own eyes he had seen a real Man. He had heard Him speak.

"Which we have looked upon" is the expression that John used when he wrote John 1:14 in his Gospel:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (**and**

**we beheld his glory,** the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

And so this expression seems to mean that just as John “saw” the Lord in the flesh, so he saw or “beheld his glory” with the eyes of his heart. He was given to understand that this Person with whom he had become acquainted as a Man, was more than a Man; He was indeed “the Word of life.” John saw the revelation of divine life in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Not only that, but he said, “And our hands have handled, of the Word of life.” Robertson pointed out that the reality of the humanity of the Person of our Lord was confirmed by sound, sight, and touch.

The key word in verse 2 is the word “manifested” which appears at the beginning of the verse, and again at the end of the verse. John could not have seen and heard if “the life” had not been “manifested,” that is, *revealed!* It was as we read a moment ago in John 1:14, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” God the Son came to earth as a babe, born of a virgin, and to many it was given to understand that He was not only a true and absolutely perfect Man, but He was the Son of God incarnate.

And John said we “bear witness,” that is, as to Who He was and is, “and shew unto you.” What does this mean? “Shew” is the translation of a Greek word which not only means *to declare publicly*, but it means *to declare what he had been charged to declare*. So this adds to John’s credentials. Not only did John preach this by divine authority, but he was writing under the same authority. This means that John was not writing just because he wanted to, but he was writing to fulfill a commission which God had placed him under.

Here John spoke of our Lord as “that eternal life, which was with the Father.” This is divine life. It is a new and different kind of life from that which we have as mortal human beings. This is what the Lord meant when He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25), as well as when He said, “I am...the life” (John 14:6). *So to have eternal life is to share in the very life of God, and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.* Cf. what John wrote in 1 John 5:11, 12. To have eternal life is to have Christ.

I trust that with the eyes of our hearts we are seeing today what the Apostle John saw so long ago in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can’t hear our Lord speak so that our ears hear the sound of His voice. Nor can we see

Him as a visible human being standing before us. We can't touch Him with our hands. But by God's grace we understand Who He is, and by God's grace we can trust Him to give us life, eternal life, divine life, the very life of God.

Now what was John's purpose in *showing* all of this about Christ to us? We see his purpose in 1 John 1:3.

## II. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S SUPREME PURPOSE (1 John 1:3).

His purpose had to do, and today *has to do*, with FELLOWSHIP! What is fellowship?

Often we think of fellowship as any time when we get together with other Christians, whether it be with just one or with a whole group. That may be the occasion when we have fellowship, but just being together is not necessarily fellowship.

The Greek word for "fellowship" is a word which most of you have heard at some time or another: *κοινωνία*. It speaks of the way we share with each other spiritually. It is not always in what we say, but just in what we are -- our love for the Lord, our desire to please Him, our hunger to know Him better. It is when I can participate with you in your relationship with the Lord, and you can participate with me in my relationship with the Lord. Mary was having fellowship with the Lord when she sat at His feet to hear His Word. When we have fellowship with each other, we minister to each other. When we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, He ministers to us. If we minister to Him it is with our worship and thanksgiving. We can have fellowship with the Lord when we pray together. We are having fellowship with the Lord when we talk about Him.

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 1:9,

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But he also told the Corinthians this:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14)?

In a few moments we are going to be observing the Lord's Supper. Did you know that Paul used this word "fellowship" in connection with the

Lord's Supper? We sometimes speak of this as "communion," don't we? Let me read to you what Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10:16:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not **the communion** of the body of Christ?

You see, even as we handle the bread and the cup, the Lord expects this to be a time of fellowship with Him, where through our meditation on the shed blood and broken body of our Lord we are receiving spiritual strength from our Lord as we open our hearts for Him to minister to us.

**Concl:** What an amazing thought it is that we can have fellowship with God our Father, and with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And second only to that is the truth that we can have fellowship with each other in Christ. If you want one word which sums up the whole of what it means to be a Christian, it is the word *fellowship*! There is nothing greater that a human being can experience than fellowship with God, and the fellowship that we can have with each other. It can become greater and richer and more intimate, but a newborn babe in Christ is immediately a part of the fellowship of the saints. Is it any wonder that the Apostle John, even in his old age, seemed like he could hardly wait to get into this subject of fellowship with God. It is not surprising that when the Lord rebuked Martha for her impatience with Mary, that He said,

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:  
42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:41-42).

There is no question but that we all need more fellowship with the Lord, but it is equally true that we need to have more fellowship with each other. Let's talk to Him more than we do, and in our conversation with each other, let us talk about Him more than we do. And as we come to the communion table this morning, may our hearts be open so that each one of us may take this time to enjoy personal fellowship with our Savior and with our heavenly Father.

What we have considered this morning comes to us on the highest authority, and if we have listened with our hearts, can lead to the fulfillment of the greatest purpose God could possibly have prepared for us.

**FULNESS OF JOY**

1 John 1:4-7

**Intro:** Last Sunday I began the exposition of 1 John. The Apostle John's name does not appear in the epistle, but he has long been recognized as the one who wrote it. It is not addressed to any particular church, and so it is considered to be a *general epistle*, written for all of the people of God wherever they may be, and whenever they may have lived. It is an epistle for all of *the family of God*.

The suggested dates for the writing of this letter, and the two which follow, run from 85 A.D. to 95 A.D. It is generally believed that the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle John were all about the same age, and that their ages were similar to the years of the first century. So the Apostle John was approximately 85 to 95 years old when he wrote these epistles (1, 2, and 3 John), the only survivor of the apostles, and a man whose spiritual life had matured continuously through the years of his life. The same could be said of his understanding of the truth, and his unshakeable convictions regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. The passing of the years had only deepened his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his love for the Savior.

Verses 1 and 2 and the first part of verse 3 give us his credentials, his authority for writing this epistle. (Repeat them.)

The latter part of verse 3 gives us his supreme purpose: "That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." So *fellowship with God, fellowship with God's Son, and our fellowship with Them and with each other as believers in Christ*, is the theme of the epistle. Only true believers are admitted to such a fellowship, and so the Apostle John spent much of his time in the epistle pointing the identifying marks of a true Christian. We also see how he defended the truth against false teachers since error is always a major hindrance to fellowship with God.

By the new birth we have become the recipients of eternal life, which is divine life; it is God's life. To have fellowship with God is to know Him, to walk with Him, to trust Him. This is what the Christian life is. It is participating in all that God is, all that Christ is, and all that the Holy Spirit is. And as we talk about God, and share with each other what we know about God, encouraging each other in our walk with Him, this is fellowship. Fellowship is not a group of Christians getting together to talk about the weather, or politics, or sports, or any other of the many

subjects which we often talk about. Christian fellowship is fellowship in Christ. And it surely can be said that the blessing of our fellowship with each other in the family of God is dependent upon our personal fellowship with the Lord in the Word and in prayer. Christian fellowship is having our lives centered in God and in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. And notice that it was John's fellowship with the Lord that made him so anxious for every believer to enter fully into the same precious and ever-increasing fellowship with God. It had been 55 or 60 years since the Lord Jesus Christ had gone back to heaven and to the Father, but the Apostle John's fellowship with Christ and with the Father had never stopped during that whole time. It had only become a greater fellowship which had brought greater joy and greater peace to the heart of this aged servant of the Lord.

What an amazing thing that he, or any of us, could say, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I am very sure that as the years had come and gone in the Apostle John's life, his sense of unworthiness of such a fellowship had increased continually in his heart. No person who has ever lived is worthy of such a fellowship. And it can only be ours through the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He has done, and continues to do for us. So you see, only one who really knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior can possibly make such a claim to have and to enjoy such a fellowship.

Now let us look at our text for today: verses 4-7.

Remember that this epistle was not written with chapters and verses. It is a letter. And so the best commentary is what we might call *a running commentary*, that is, going from one verse to the next like we would read any letter that was written to us. We have to divide it up because of the limitations of time, but it is always important to notice what the writer has been saying, and how what he writes leads on to what he says in the verses that follow.

So, after saying what he said about "fellowship," he went on to say, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." I have taken my subject from this verse, and so let me call my first point:

### **I. THE FULNESS OF JOY (1 John 1:4).**

There is some question among Greek scholars as to whether or not John said "your joy," or *our joy*. Some texts say "your," and others say *our*. Really it doesn't make a great deal of difference which way it reads

because we can be sure that those who received this letter would experience in their fellowship with the Lord, and the Apostle John would experience added joy as being the one through whom the believers to whom he was writing would enter into a greater fellowship with the three Persons of the Godhead. So we don't need to spend a lot of time trying to decide which has the greatest authority, "your" or *our*. But what is important for us to see is that this fellowship with God produces a fulness of fellowship, and what the Apostle John would go on to say would show all that would increase the joy of their fellowship.

Perhaps you remember other verses in Scripture which speak of the fulness of joy. For example, Psa. 16:11:

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Peter quoted this verse when he was preaching in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. The record is given to us in Acts 2:28 where we read that he said this:

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Whether you believe that this verse speaks of the joy we will have in heaven when we are with the Lord, or to the joy of fellowship with the Lord as we enjoy His presence here on earth, the result is the same: *fulness of joy!*

When the Lord was speaking to His disciples after they all had left the Upper Room, you will remember that He said this:

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

And then a little later He said this about prayer:

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

In 2 John 1:12 we find the apostle John concluding that epistle with these words:

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

We don't know who the "elect lady" was to whom the Apostle John wrote that epistle, but it is clear that he was anticipating the fellowship that he was going to have with her. He knew that it would be a time when their joy would be full.

Even a couple verses from the twenty-third Psalm could be added to this list of verse: Psalm 23:4, 5:

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; **my cup runneth over.**

What does it mean to have “fulness of joy”? What did David mean when he said that *his cup was running over*? These expressions mean that the person who has fulness of joy is completely satisfied, perfectly happy. He or she doesn't need a lot of other things to complete his or her happiness. To have the Lord, to know Him, and to have fellowship with Him brings a joy in which nothing is lacking. It is not God or Christ plus something else, or someone else, but God alone, Christ alone, the Holy Spirit alone! If you and I would only learn this, and believe it, how much more would we enjoy reading the Word, and what a delight it would be to us to be able to commune with the Lord in prayer wherever we might be! Everybody is continually looking for that which is going to make them happy and satisfied, but most people are looking for it in the wrong places. And even many of us who know the Lord have not really found that fulness of joy which we ought to be experiencing in the Lord.

But let us go on and learn more about this fellowship. Verse 5 gives us the nature of the One with Whom we have fellowship:

## II. “GOD IS LIGHT” (1 John 1:5).

Not only does John say here that “God is light,” but he went on to say that “in him is no darkness at all.” So this means He is all light. You will never find any darkness in Him.

Light means life; darkness means death. Light also means righteousness; darkness means sin and unrighteousness. This is confirmed by a question which Paul asked the Corinthian believers in 2 Cor. 6:14:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?  
and what communion hath light with darkness?

And the Lord had this to say when He was speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:19-21:

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, be-

cause their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

In God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit you will always find the light. You will always find perfect righteousness; you will never find any sin of any kind in Any of Them. After the Lord had forgiven the woman taken in the very act of adultery, He said this to the scribes and the Pharisees:

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

So what does this mean with respect to fellowship? It means that if you and I are to have fellowship with God, we cannot have fellowship with Him if we are living in sin. This is what we learn in verses 6 and 7. Let us call it:

### **III. THE PLACE OF FELLOWSHIP (1 John 1:6-7).**

I am not thinking about where you read your Bible and pray. Nor am I thinking about where you go to church. I am thinking like the Apostle John was thinking -- about whether you are *walking in darkness*, or whether you are *walking in the light*." "Walking" means the same as *living*. To walk in darkness is to be living in sin; to be walking in the light is to be living like the Bible tells us how to live. The Bible being the Word of God gives us light. It reveals to us what God is like, and it will tell us if we are living to please God, or if we are living just any way that we want to live.

Will you notice that this is the first of several times that the Apostle John wrote, "If we say..." Talk can be very cheap. Many people will say that they know the Lord and that they are walking in fellowship with God, but John says that if they are walking in darkness, if they are living in sin, they are lying when they say that they are in fellowship with God because God is light and you will never find Him walking in darkness.

What is important about fellowship? It is that we are walking in the light, "as He [God] is in the light." But we all have to admit that daily we sin against the Lord. Does that mean that we can never have fellowship with

God? No! We have been saved to have fellowship with the Lord. Next week we will come to a verse which tells us what a Christian is supposed to do about his sin. But there is something very wonderful about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ that we don't talk about as much as we should. And it is this: If we are walking in the light, as God is in the light, we do have fellowship with God and with each other, "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us" (continually is cleansing us) "from all sin."

We all have to confess that we never do walk in the light *perfectly*. That may be our desire, but we never will reach that goal in this life. However, that must be our objective. Secondly, we have to recognize that we often commit sins when we may not recognize that we are sinning. I am talking about thoughts we have, or ways in which we waste time, or foolish things that we say. We can be displeasing the Lord by attitudes we have toward people, whether they be believers or unbelievers. So, how then can we ever expect to have fellowship with the Lord? Because God in His grace is continually cleansing us from our sins through the sacrifice that Christ made for us when He died on the Cross. The blood of Christ has a continual cleansing effect upon our lives and upon our sins. We'll be thinking next week, the Lord willing, about sins that we recognize, sins that we know about. That calls for something else. But now we are thinking of the continual effect that the blood of Christ has upon our sins like the watering of our eyes which has been carrying away impurities that would trouble us and possibly cause infection. We haven't been thinking about that while we have been here today, but it has been going on without any conscious effort on our part.

So weak as we are, and defiled as we can be, fellowship is possible through the same sacrifice which brought us salvation in the first place. But our object must be to bring our lives more and more into conformity with the will of God, walking in the light, where we can enjoy fellowship with God and with each other. And the closer we walk with God, the more we see our own sinfulness, but also we see in a clearer way how God is conforming us into the likeness of His Son. This is the great doctrine of our sanctification.

**Concl:** As I close, let me go back to the place we started today -- to verse 4. Where do we find a fulness of joy living in a world like we live in. It is not to be found in the world, its pleasures, its possessions, its positions, its money, its honor. And it is certainly not to be found in sin. Our Bibles point the way to "fulness of joy." It is to be found in fellowship with God and with our Lord Jesus Christ. Be faithful in reading your

Bible. It is in the Bible that you and I will get to know God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And faithful in prayer. Ask God to teach you by His Holy Spirit what He wants you to know. And then be faithful in doing the will of God. We are walking in the light when we are living in obedience to the Word of God. And it is in fellowship with God that we experience the fulness of joy which makes us realize that we don't have to look elsewhere for the complete satisfaction of our hearts in this life.

## A CHRISTIAN AND SIN

1 John 1:8-2:2

**Intro:** There are many results which follow from our fellowship with God, and one of them is a greater awareness of sin in our lives. This is actually an impression that grows and grows throughout our lives if we are walking in fellowship with the Lord. If you see a person who is very conscious of his deep sinfulness, you are usually looking at a Christian who is living in close, personal fellowship with the Lord. And the opposite is true. A person who carries no deep awareness of his personal sin, is a person who knows little or nothing of fellowship with the Lord. This does not mean that a believer who is both conscious and humbled by his own sin will be morbid in his behavior. No. But it does mean that he will live in a continual awareness of his unworthiness even to be a Christian, and at the same time his heart will be full of praise to God for saving him. I think it can be said about professing Christians today that there is far too little realization of personal sin, and the tragic effects which sin can have in our lives.

Here in the first chapter to 1 John we have a series of false claims which Christians are often guilty of making. The first we had in verse 6. We say that we have fellowship with God while we are living in sin. It does not have to be what we would call a gross, shameful kind of sin. It can be any sin--an unforgiving attitude toward someone. It can be a failure to be reading the Word, and/or a failure to pray. It can be a proud heart, or a critical spirit. Sin is any violation of the Word of God. It is anything that is contrary to the character of God. So to say that we are having fellowship with the Lord while we are allowing sins to remain in our lives, is a lie. The truth is something that we not only need *to believe*, but it is something that we need *to do*. I said very truthfully at Mrs. Garnett's service yesterday that she was not only a lady who *loved* the truth, the truth of God's Word, but she *lived* the truth. And that is the main reason that she experienced such wonderful fellowship with the Lord.

So 1 John 1:6 is a false claim. We can't be experiencing real fellowship with the Lord as long as we are *walking in darkness--whatever that degree of darkness might be*. We falsely comfort ourselves by thinking that no one knows our hearts, but God knows our hearts, and others will learn the true condition of our hearts also, if we continue to allow things in our lives which we know are not pleasing to God.

The truth about fellowship is stated in verse 7. (Read.) We are never going to attain unto a life of sinless perfection as long as we live in this

world, but perfection needs to be our goal. Some day, when we are with the Lord, we will be perfect. Paul's words to the church at Philippi should be the attitude of all of us as the children of God. Let me read Phil. 3:12 for you:

— Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Today I want to go on into verse 8 of 1 John 1, and on into the first two verses of chapter 2 where you can see very clearly that Paul was concerned about **A CHRISTIAN AND SIN.**

**(Read 1 John 1:8-2:2.)**

The first thing to face us in this passage is:

### **I. A SECOND FALSE CLAIM (1 John 1:8).**

I believe that John was thinking particularly in this passage about sin in the life of a Christian. That is certainly the case in verses 6 and 7. And it seems to me that this interpretation is confirmed by John's words at the beginning of chapter 2: "My little children, these things write I **unto you**, that ye sin not."

What did he mean when he said, "If we say that we have no sin"?

All of us who know the Lord should be aware that we sin because we are sinners. Or to state it another way, we sin because we have a sinful nature which is only capable of sinning and displeasing God. To have to recognize that we *have sin* is to say that sin is in us, and, in the words of Bishop Westcott, that it exercises a "continuous source of influence" in our lives. Cf. *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 22.

— Now to say that we no longer *have sin*, that we are free from that which causes us to sin, or that which attracts us to sinful things, means that "we deceive ourselves," and to that extent "the truth is not in us." The Apostle John did not mean that we do not have any of the truth, but he did mean that we are wrong, wrong, wrong on that particular point of doctrine. The truth is that we do have sin in us. It is a problem to us every day of our lives. And we need to learn how to victoriously over sin in spite of the fact that we as believers still have sin in us. We still have a sin nature. We **will** sin. The Apostle John is saying here what Paul discussed more in detail in Romans 6, that we still have sin and can sin,

but because of our salvation we no longer need to serve sin like we did before we were saved. Paul said in Romans 6:14,

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The teaching of Scripture is that we *have sin* in us, and therefore we *can sin*, and yet it is also true that we *don't have to sin*.

This, then, leads us to John's next point:

## II. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO WHEN WE SIN?

This takes us down to the end of the first chapter.

We need to "confess our sins." We see this in verses 9 and 10.

Sin hinders fellowship with God. Therefore, when we do sin, we need to "confess our sins." And since, unfortunately, we are always sinning in some way--in what we think, or in what we say, or in what we do or where we go, *or in what we fail to do, the confession of sin is a necessary part of our lives every day that we live.* And remember I said a moment ago that the more we enjoy fellowship with the Lord, the more we will become conscious of our sins. And let me say this also, the more you and I read the Word of God for ourselves, and the more sensitive we are to what we hear when the Word is taught and preached, the more we will realize how sinful we are. The most godly people in Scripture have manifested a great consciousness of their sins.

Let me give you a very unusual example of this from Scripture.

On one occasion when our Lord was down by the sea of Galilee, the crowd was so large, and the people were pressing upon him, that He got into a ship which was owned by Simon Peter, and told him to go out a little ways into the water, and there the Lord taught the people from the boat. And then we read this in Luke 5:4-10:

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in

the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Now I can't explain fully what made Peter and James and John feel like they did, so keenly conscious of their sinfulness. The Lord may have been speaking about sin. However, we can't say for sure that He was. It had to be that in that miracle they saw the glory of the Lord, and seeing His glory, they realized their own sinfulness in contrast. If we are really seeing the Lord in His Word, what we see will have the same effect upon us. Our fellowship with the Lord will impress us with our own sinfulness.

To whom do we confess our sins? I think it is obvious that there is only one answer to that question. There may be times when we have to confess sin to people we have wronged, but first and foremost *we confess our sins to God!*

What does it mean to confess our sins?

The Greek word *to confess* literally means *to say the same thing*. So to confess our sins to God means that we say the same thing about our sins that God says. It means to call sin, *sin*, and not something else. The refusal of people in the world to call sin, *sin*, is one of the main reasons that many people are not saved. We will talk about our weaknesses, or our mistakes, but we don't like to call sin, *sin*, because that immediately means that we are guilty before God.

But what happens when we truly, as believers, confess our sins unto God? Listen again to what the Apostle John wrote: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Our sins bring the charge of guilt before God. Our sins are primarily against Him. That is what David said about the terrible sins that he had committed. And the same is true of lesser sins. He said to the Lord, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"

(Psa. 51:4a). Actually David had sinned against Bathsheba, and against her husband, and against all of the people of Israel, but when God convicted him of his sin, the fact that he had sinned against God was overwhelming to his soul. Here we have God's promise that when we confess our sins to God, He will forgive us. To forgive means to release us from the charge that has been placed against us because of our sins.

But sin also has a defiling effect upon us. As I have said before, **sin makes us dirty**. Only God can cleanse us. And the basis of His forgiveness, as we learned in verse 7, is "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son." When I think of cleansing, I like to think of the words of God in Isa. 1:18 where the Lord said this to the people of Judah:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:  
though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa. 1:18).

There is only One Who can forgive sins, only One Who can save. And that One is GOD! And He does it, not just because He is loving and merciful, but because He is also righteous, and His righteousness was fully satisfied for all of our sins when the Lord Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself at the Cross. *Without the death of Christ all of us would have been hopelessly lost for all eternity!*

But what did the Apostle John mean when He said about God that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? "Faithful and just" to whom? To you? To me? Yes, in a secondary way. He will be faithful to His promise to forgive us. And He will be perfectly "just" in what He does, not closing His eyes to our sins, nor just excusing us. His righteousness was satisfied by His Son at the Cross when the Lord took our sins upon Himself. So we have to say that more than being "faithful and just" to you and to me, *when God forgives us and cleanses us, He is being faithful and just to His Son!* God will never ignore what His Son has done for us when we come to Him confessing our sins. *How can anyone ever adequately say all that needs to be said about such a glorious truth?*

Now look at verse 10.

If, after all that the Bible tells us about the holiness of God, and after all that the Bible tells us about sin, many of those things which we know we have been guilty of, if we are to say that "we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar, and his word is not in us." And this is the third false

claim which the Apostle John has mentioned. No Christian would ever want to call God a liar, but that is what we are doing when God says that we have sinned, and we refuse to admit it. How much better it is to confess it, get it out of the way, and enjoy renewed fellowship with our God, and with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when we sin (and we are continually sinning), there is something immensely important that we need *to do*. We need to confess our sins. But for just a moment I want to take you to the first two verses of chapter 2 because they really belong to chapter 1. I may come back to them next week because these two verses are so wonderful.

Let me give them the heading:

### **III. WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW AND TO REMEMBER WHEN WE SIN (1 John 2:1, 2).**

First notice how loving and gracious the Apostle John was in dealing with this subject of believers and their sins. What some were saying was enough to thoroughly exasperate him. Some were claiming to be in fellowship with the Lord while they were living in sin. Others claimed that they no longer had any sin in them, and therefore they felt that they didn't need to be concerned about sin anymore. And still others were denying that they had sinned when John knew, and they really knew down in their hearts, that they had.

So why had he written all of this to them? *Because he did not want them to sin!* John knew the tragic results of sin. He knew that people are never better when they sin; they are always worse than they were before. He knew that sin never helps us, but always defiles us, makes us dirty in God's sight. And so he said to them as an older servant of the Lord, "My little children, these things..."

But then he went on to say right after that, "But if any man sin" (the Greek says, *But if anyone sins*--whether man or woman, young man or young woman, boy or girl--what? "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous: And he is the propitiation..."

The word translated "advocate" comes to us from the Latin, and it means the same as the Greek original word which the Apostle John used here, the word Παράκλητος. We get our English word Paraclete from it. It is the same word that the Lord Jesus used of the Holy Spirit and of Himself in John 14, 15, and 16. It means *one who is called to our side to help us*.

It means that the Lord Jesus Christ is on our side. It means that the Holy Spirit is on our side. It means that they will help us when our sins have gotten us, so to speak, into trouble with God. But let me temper that statement because we need to remember that it is God Who has given us the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is God Who has given us the Holy Spirit. So it is apparent that God is on our side, too. That's why we should never let our sins drive us away from God. Although our sins grieve God, yet we have overwhelming evidence in Scripture that God is on our side. Jesus Christ is "the propitiation for our sins." Propitiation means *satisfaction*. Our Lord Jesus Christ died to satisfy a holy God concerning all of our sins. And He is the only One Who can save us. And He also is the only One to Whom we must come when we sin, confessing our sins, trusting Him to be faithful and just to us because Christ died to put away our sins, and to make us completely acceptable to God.

**Concl:** I said concerning this last point that it is something for us to **know** and to **remember**. There are many, many Christians who don't know this. They have never learned that we have, and always will have, One Who is with the Father, pleading the merits of His own blood, that we might be forgiven when we sin, and cleansed, and restored to His blessed fellowship. So if you know some child of God who is struggling under the load of sin, will you tell them that there is One Who is already on their case, taking their side, seeking their full restoration. How wonderful are those words *forgiven* and *cleansed*! May the Lord make them a soothing balm to our souls. This is more of what we could never deserve, but we have them by the grace and mercy of our wonderful God.

For anyone who is here today without Christ, let me say to you that there is only one answer for your sins. It is a Person, God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for sinners. He died to secure the eternal salvation of all who will ever come to Christ. So on the authority of the Bible I call you today to come to Christ, put your trust in Him as the one and only Sin Bearer. He promised that if you would come to Him He would not only receive you, but He would never cast you out. Time will not erase your sins. Your good works can never be good enough. Come to Christ as you are, a guilty and helpless sinner, and experience today the riches of His grace as He forgives you of your sins and gives you eternal life.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Come to Him now. Put your trust in Him. He is the only One Who can save you and cleanse you from your sins.

## JESUS CHRIST, OUR RIGHTEOUS ADVOCATE

1 John 2:1, 2

**Intro:** While the masses of the people steadfastly refused to acknowledge that there is such a thing as sin, the true Christian knows that he has sinned in the past, and that he still sins in the present, and that in many ways, he is going to continue to sin in the future. And he knows that he sins because he was born a sinner, and, unless the Lord comes before, he will die a sinner. This does not mean that he tries to sin, nor that he wants to sin. A true Christian hates sin because he, or she, knows that sin displeases God. In fact, this can be our definition of sin: It is anything that is displeasing to God. Sometime we sin by doing what God does **not** want us to do, and at other times we sin because we **do not do** what God wants us to do. And so we say that there are **sins of commission**, and there are **sins of omission**. Whether the people of the world want to admit it or not, it is a terrible fact of life that sin is responsible for all of the unhappiness, all of the tragedies, all of the heartaches of life. And this can be either our sin, or the sins of others. The Bible plainly declares that sin is the universal problem of every human being. King Solomon, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, said in Ecc. 7:20,

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

By that he meant that when you consider a man who diligently tries to do what is right in God's sight, you know that he is sinner. The only Person Who has ever lived Who has been free from the charge of sin, was our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says of Him that:

- 1) He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).
- 2) That "in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).
- 3) That He "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22).
- 4) And that He was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

And since our Lord was in the image of the Father, the same statements can be made of Him, and also of the Holy Spirit. Take, for example, what Paul wrote to Titus about God. He said this:

In hope of eternal life, which **God, that cannot lie**, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2).

It is not simply that God **did not lie**, but that He "cannot lie"! The writer of Hebrews also has given us this testimony to the absolute sinlessness of God:

- 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:
- 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impos-

sible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us (Heb. 6:17-18).

But the case is different with us, as the Apostle John showed in 1 John 1. We can sin, and we do sin, and we will sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are self-deceived; and if we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar because He has said in His Word that we do sin. More than that, we are sinners, **sinners by nature**, and that often makes us **sinners by choice**.

Now, having been reminded of what we are in contrast with what God is, and Jesus Christ is, and what the Holy Spirit, notice:

### **I. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S MESSAGE OF HOPE (1 John 2:1a).**

Hear his message: "My little children, these things write is unto you, that ye sin not." We could translate the latter part of this verse, *that ye may not sin*.

The Apostle John was very good about telling us why he was writing this epistle. In fact, he said it so many times that we may struggle to try to determine which was the primary reason, and how the others fit into the main purpose.

I have suggested to you that verse 3 of chapter 1 gives us the main purpose, and so I have to say that I believe this in chapter 2, verse 1, is stating one of the ways, and yet a major way, by which our fellowship with God is maintained. Therefore, it seems that the Apostle John was saying here that a major purpose of his epistle was to show us *why we do not need to go on sinning. We have that capacity, but not the necessity*. This is important for everyone of us to understand.

As Lenski pointed out in his commentary, some might feel after reading what John had to say about their sin, and their ability to sin, that there would be no reason to try to struggle against sin. Therefore, they would feel that they should accept their sinfulness as a fact of life, and not worry about it.

But that was not what the Apostle John wanted them to think. He wanted them to know that having "eternal life" (1 John 1:2) had completely changed the situation for every child of God. We can sin, *but we do not*

*have to sin!* We still have our old sin nature, but we have new life in Christ which is more powerful than the old life. Let me give you some verses which will support this.

After the men had left who had accused the woman whom they said had been taken in the very act of committing adultery, the Lord said this to some of the Pharisees who remained:

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12b).

He didn't say that those who followed him could not sin, but He said that they would not "walk in darkness"; they would not *live in sin*.

Or take another example: Rom. 6:1-2:

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians emphasizes the same truth: 1 Cor. 15:34:

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: is speak this to your shame.

And then in Paul's letter to Titus we find these words in Titus 2:11-12:

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

Let me give you a final word on this point from the Apostle Peter, words found in 1 Pet. 1:15-16:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for is am holy.

The message of the whole Bible is a message of hope concerning our present deliverance from sin, not from the possibility of sin, but from the necessity to sin. When our Lord died for us, He died not only to remove sin's penalty, but also to break sin's power over His people. Some day we won't be able to sin at all, but we will have to wait until we get to heaven before that will be true of us.

So we are going to learn things in this epistle which will help us to refrain from sinning. But, at the same time, we have to face:

## II. A GRIM POSSIBILITY (1 John 2:1m).

Here it is: “And if any man sin.”

I mentioned to you last week that the Greek says, *And if anyone sins*. I almost got myself into trouble with the ladies pointing this out. But it means *anyone*, whether man, or lady, or young person, or child--if anyone who has trusted in Christ sins...

God in His infinite wisdom has not taken away our ability to sin just because we are saved. Perhaps He has left that possibility there so we would always be reminded that we will always need to trust Him to keep us from sinning. I don't know the full reason. But substitute your name in this verse, and think of the grief it will bring to you if you sin, and how it will grieve God, and the possibility this raises of others being hurt by your sin, or my sin. *If anyone sins...* That happens every day that we, the children of God, SIN! Oh, let us pray that the Lord will keep us from sinning! May it be with us as the Lord told the woman taken in adultery, “Go, and sin no more.” (John 8:11).

But what if we do? Look with me now at the last part of verse 1 here in 1 John 2. We see that we have:

## III. ANOTHER EVIDENCE OF THE GRACE OF GOD (1 John 2:1b).

Will we lose our salvation? Some people, some of the Lord's people, say that we will. Will we suffer some great calamity in our lives? We only run that possibility if we continue on in our sin. What does happen when we as believers commit sin?

We have already seen that fellowship can be restored if we confess our sins. And this means to confess, and to forsake our sin--not confess it, and then go back to it later knowing that we can come again and seek God's forgiveness. That is not what confession is. Remember Solomon's words about the confession of sin:

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth **and forsaketh them** shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13).

But what else did the Apostle John have to tell us. Read it for yourself: “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” In the brief look we had at this verse last Sunday I pointed out that the

Greek word translated “advocate” is the same word which is translated “Comforter” and used of the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15, and 16. It is the Greek word Παράκλητος. Here the word, the title, is used of our Lord. And our Lord implied that He was a Paraclete, a Comforter, the Helper of His people when He said the words recorded for us in John 14:16:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

What did the Lord mean, “another Comforter.” He meant that He had been the Helper of His people up to that time, and the Father was going to send “another Comforter” *of the same kind*, and that One would be the Holy Spirit. The Lord was not giving up the role, but from that point on His people, instead of having One Comforter, would have Two: The Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

This word Paraclete is only used five times in the NT: 4 times in John 14 (2x), 15, and 16, and once here in 1 John. The word is used in Greek literature to speak of a friend (or friends) of the accused who voluntarily steps in and personally urges the judge (in this case, God) to decide in favor of the accused. See Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude*, p. 398.

This is not meant to make us careless about sinning, but it is to keep us from despair when we do sin. Rightfully we should be cast away from God when we sin because God is so holy that He cannot look on sin. But instead we are to learn that our Savior continues to be our Friend and our Advocate even when we dishonor Him with our sin, and when we grieve our heavenly Father as well as the Holy Spirit.

The writer of Hebrews was speaking about the advocacy of Christ in Heb. 7:25-27 when he wrote this:

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

So to say that Christ is our Advocate, our Paraclete, our Comforter, is the same as saying that He is our High Priest. And the fact that God appointed Him to be our High Priest is evidence that God is on our side also

even when we sin, and even though He is grieved with our sin. So we can then say, as Paul did in Romans 8:31,

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us,  
who can be against us?

And then he followed that with this in Romans 8:34:

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea  
rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of  
God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Before we leave this verse, notice that the Apostle John called our Lord, “Jesus Christ, the righteous.” We have sinned, but He never has sinned. He died in our place on Calvary’s Cross. It was “Jesus Christ, the righteous” One Who died for us, the unrighteous.

This is what Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:21. Let me read it to you from the New King James. The same words are there that are in the original King James, but they are in a better order in the NKJV:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that  
we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Now for us to “become the righteousness of God in Him,” that is, *in Christ*, means that Christ fully accomplished what He set out to do. And this makes Him “the propitiation for our sins.”

Now we are ready for 1 John 2:2 where we have:

#### **IV. A FURTHER WORD OF EXPLANATION (1 John 2:2).**

When you think of *propitiation*, think of *satisfaction*. *Propitiation* means that Christ did everything necessary to satisfy God that our sins were fully atoned for by His death on the Cross. Christ left nothing undone. Christ did not die just for some of His people’s sins; He died for them all --past, present, and future. We add nothing, and can add nothing, to what He has done. God requires no more than what Christ has done. We don’t complete it by our faith; our faith is a gift from God enabling us to believe in Christ. So God even gets the glory for our faith.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer at Dallas Seminary used to say (and he loved to say it, and said it over and over), “*God is propitious.*” What did He mean? He meant that *God is favorably disposed toward all who come to Him through Christ.*” Christ is the Way to God, the only Way, and a very certain Way. God will never turn anyone down who comes to Him through Christ, through the sacrifice which Christ offered on the Cross.

But there is still a part of this verse that we have to understand before I close. It is this: That Christ is not only the propitiation for our sins, “but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Now the question is this: Did Jesus Christ die to save everybody in the whole world? Was that His purpose when He died on the Cross? On the other hand, if you believe that He died to save everybody in the whole world, and He is the propitiation for everybody’s sins, then the only possible interpretation you can put on this verse is *that everybody will eventually be saved*.

*But we know that this is not true--everybody is NOT being saved! Who is being saved? Only those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and who have been drawn to Christ by the Holy Spirit. They are the ones for whom Christ is the propitiation. How then can we say that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world?*

The term “world” sometimes means everybody in the world, but at other times it is more limited. To the NT writers the term “world” was often used to mean *the Roman world*, meaning the Roman Empire. But it was also used to designate *the Gentile world*, meaning all of the world outside of the Jewish people. So what John was saying here was not that our Lord died to save everybody, but that wherever people in the world are to be saved, *the only Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the only way of salvation is through faith in Him*. The Bible never contradicts itself, and this is the teaching that is in accord with the rest of Scripture.

**Concl:** Along with these great truths, we are commanded to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to *every human being*. God commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And all who do come to Christ and believe in Him will be saved. None who come will be turned away, or cast away. But when the work is all finished and the redeemed are in glory, we will see that God has fully accomplished His purposes through Christ, and that those whom He chose for salvation before the foundation of the world are those upon whose hearts God has moved to cause them to come to the Lord, and to trust in Him as their Savior.

Those of us who are saved can rejoice in the Lord that He has fully provided for our salvation. Any of you who are not saved need to come to Christ today, knowing that there is only one way for you to be saved, and that is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU KNOW CHRIST?**

1 John 2:3-6

**Intro:** As we come to 1 John 2:3, we come to a very important word which the Apostle John used many times in this epistle. It is the word, *know*. We have it twice in verse 3, once in verse 4, and once again in verse 5. I would encourage you to read through these five chapters looking, and perhaps marking, every time you find this word. I think that you will find it some 38 times. A few times our translators have used other words, such as, *perceive*, or *see*, but I will point those out to you as we come to them in our exposition of this epistle. In the Greek John used two words which are translated *know*, but their meaning is so similar that we really do not need to be concerned about which word John used. As we come to them, if there is a slight difference, I will point out the difference to you.

What we do need to understand is that the Apostle John was dealing with the doctrine of assurance. Some people who claim to be Christians say that we can't really know that we are saved until we get to heaven. That certainly is not the teaching of Scripture. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Tim. 2:12, the last part of the verse, "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Paul was not in any doubt about his salvation, and neither were Peter or John or any of the other writers of Scripture. They knew that they were saved, and they knew that they would be kept--that the Lord would never cast them away. They did not know this because they were certain that they would always please God, but they knew this for two reasons:

1) Because they understood that salvation was the work of God, not a combination of what God does and what we do, and surely not a reward that God gives us for works that we do. They knew that God does the saving, and that He does the keeping.

But they knew this for a second reason:

2) Because they had the testimony of the Spirit that they were saved. This was not some feeling that they had, but it was confidence established on the evidences that they could see in their lives that the Lord had saved them and changed them.

Speaking of the testimony of the Spirit, let me read to you what the Apostle Paul wrote on this subject. It is found in Rom. 8:16. 17:

16 The Spirit itself [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and jointheirs

with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Many years ago when I was attending university, I attended a conference where the main speaker was Dr. William Pettingill. And he was teaching 1 John. That was when I first fell in love with this epistle. Dr. Pettingill was one of the editors of the original Scofield Bible, a very godly man, and you will find his name listed with the other editors if you have one of the old Scofield Bibles.

I mention Dr. Pettingill because of something that he said about the assurance of salvation which I have never forgotten. This was his comment: *“If you can get salvation and not know it, then you can lose it and never miss it.”* We learned from verse 2 that Jesus Christ *is* “eternal life.” Every person without Christ is spiritually dead. *And it is inconceivable that a person could be raised out of spiritual death and into spiritual life without knowing it!* This is why Paul could say what he did in 2 Cor. 5:17:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

And so, if a person really knows the Lord, “that eternal life” is going to be evident in the way he lives.

But I want you to notice something very important in verse 3. Let me call it:

### **I. OUR RIGHT TO CLAIM THAT WE REALLY KNOW THE LORD (1 John 2:3).**

“Hereby” is one of John’s favorite words. You will find it again in verse 5 of this chapter, and then in 3:16, 19, 24; 4:2, 13; and 5:2. And in the last of these verses, 5:2, we have what is closer to a literal translation of the words that John used—because “hereby” is the translation of two Greek words which mean, “by this,” or *in this*. So verse 3 means that if you want to be able to say with assurance that you know the Lord, you need to look in your heart for that desire every truly Christian will have. And it is even more than a desire; it is that you are really keeping His commandments.

Notice another thing in this verse. The Apostle John was not speaking of knowing *about* the Lord; he was speaking of *knowing Him*.

In our neighborhood the city is constructing a large building which is

going to be the headquarters for the Police Department in east Portland. Yesterday I was driving by the unfinished building, and I notice two uniformed policemen standing outside, looking at the building, along with another man who may have also be a police officer, but he was dressed in a business suit. As I got closer to the men, I could see that one of the men was Chief of Police Mouse. I have never met Chief Moose, but I have seen him on TV, and have seen his picture in the Oregonian many times. I am sure that it was Chief Moose looking over the new building which is not yet completely finished. I can say that I know who he is. I recognize him when I see him. But I have never had the privilege of meeting him. I can't say that I know the Portland Chief of Police.

Let me apply this to our Lord. There are many people who call themselves Christians who only know Who the Lord is. They have heard about Him. They may believe that He was the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary, performed miracles, taught many wonderful things, died on the Cross, was raised, and then went back to heaven. They know much *about* the Lord, *but they don't know HIM!* Now it is good that they know as much about the Lord as they do because if they believe what I have mentioned, what they believe is true. However, the Scriptures have this to say about even the demons, the fallen angels, including the Devil himself:

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble (James 2:19).

The Devil and his henchmen believe the right things *about* the Lord, and they have even had some personal contacts with the Lord, but they can't say that they *know Him* in the way the Apostle John was using this expression.

The word "know" is a word which speaks of more than an intellectual knowledge *about* the Lord; *it speaks of a personal acquaintance with Him which has resulted in a major transformation in a person's life.* Lenski says that it speaks of a knowledge which has resulted in the most profound effect upon a person's soul, his inner being. This is what the Bible is referring to when it speaks of being born again, of being regenerated, of being saved. One Greek commentator says that this first part of verse 3 can be translated, *Hereby we know that we know Him and continue to know Him.*

How can we truthfully make such a statement about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? The aged Apostle John would answer, "If we keep, and continue to keep, His commandments." We have come to know Him as the Savior in Whom we are trusting, and from now on we get our guidance for our lives from the commandments of the Lord.

This is really what the Apostle John was speaking about in chapter 1 when he wrote about walking in the light instead of walking in darkness. Where do we find the commandments of our Lord? We find them in the Bible. That is one reason we need to be reading the Bible. This is the reason that pastors and any who teach in our churches are commissioned to “preach the Word.” One who really knows the Lord is not going to have to be forced to read the Word; he, or she, is going to want to read it. But a true Christian won’t stop there: He, or she, wants to live the way the Bible says that we as the people of God should live.

Now let me ask you today: Does this describe you? Are you keeping the commandments of the Lord? Does it make a difference to you when you read in the Bible that you are to do certain things, and not do other things? Does it grieve you when you fail to do what God wants you to do? Does the Bible describe the kind of person you want to be? You and I need to turn these questions upon our own hearts. You and I have no right to call ourselves Christians if we are not seeking by God’s grace to keep the commandments of our Lord which are found all through the Scriptures. The Lord has given us hundreds of commandments. Some are found in the Gospels. Many of them are found in the epistles. Even in the book of the Revelation, which is the one distinctly prophetic book of the NT, we are told this at the very beginning:

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, **and keep those things which are written therein:** for the time is at hand (Rev. 1:3).

And then don’t overlook the Old Testament. *Keeping the commandments means that we have to find out what they are, and then obey them.* To talk to many who profess to know the Lord you would think that there are only ten commandments in the whole Bible! But the OT as well as the NT are full of the commandments of the Lord. They ought to mean more to us than any advice that we can possibly get from any other place or person. We can know that the truth is “in” us when the Bible is the book that we intend to live by as long as we live.

Now let us look at verse 4. Here we have:

## II. A WARNING (1 John 2:4).

I don’t think that John was speaking here about a person who is intentionally a hypocrite, one who tries to make people think that he is a Christian when he isn’t. I think that the Apostle John was speaking here about people who are *self-deceived!* He was speaking of a person who really

thinks that he knows the Lord, but doesn't. And so, whether he knows it or not, he is a liar, "and the truth is not in him," or her.

I have told you many times that I pray regularly for each one of you. I pray for you *by name*. And I pray for many members of your families who don't come to Trinity. I know also that I am not alone in this. I know that many of you pray regularly for me and my family, for our elders and deacons and their families, and I know that many, maybe all, of our elders and deacons pray regularly for you. But let me tell you what one of my greatest burdens is for you--and it is not because I am suspicious of anybody who is a part of our church family. My burden is that the Lord will not let a single person sit here Sunday after Sunday without coming to a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the kind of knowledge that results in a transformed life. One of the greatest griefs I have as I look back over my ministry is to learn of people who were in church every Sunday, listening to me as I spoke the Word, who were in some cases leaders in the church, or leaders among the young people, who have turned away from the church and from the Lord, and who today show no desire whatever to keep the commandments of our Lord. The Lord even told His own disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

I don't know your heart today, just as you don't know my heart. I can see what you are thinking at this very moment. However, I have never been more conscious than I am today of my dependence upon the Holy Spirit to get the message into your hearts. I want to see all of you in heaven. I don't know where you could possibly find a more wonderful group of people than we have here at Trinity Bible Church, but I'm praying, and I hope you are, too, that the fellowship we enjoy is truly a fellowship that we have with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not enough to preach and teach the Word of God; we need to pray the Word into people's hearts after the Word has been preached.

Let every one of us take this to heart today. And let us make sure that our talk is a true reflection of our walk, that we say that we know the Lord, and our lives back up what our lips are saying.

My text concludes with:

### III. WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1 John 2:5, 6).

There is one big encouragement in verse 5, and another in verse 6. The Apostle John was speaking here of the results that are guaranteed to us by

the Lord Himself if we keep His Word. The first is this:

**A. “In him is the love of God perfected” (1 John 2:5).**

What has the Apostle John really been thinking about as he has written about our obedience to the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ? I believe that he has been thinking about what the Lord said to His disciples in the Upper Room. He spoke to His disciples about how we are to show that we love Him. And you will find His words in John 14:21-23:

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

We show our love for the Lord by our obedience to His commandments. And this opens the way for us to experience more of the love of God in our own lives. In fact, this is what fellowship is, isn't it? A disobedient Christian begins to doubt his relationship with the Lord. His fellowship with the Lord is interrupted. But look at the latter part of this fifth verse. John did not say hereby we know that we know the Lord (although he could have said that). No, what he did say was “hereby we know that we are in Him.”

This is a great step ahead of saying that we know Him (as wonderful as that is if it is really true). We not only know Him, *but we are in Him*. Note how the Apostle John brought these two realities together as he brought this epistle to a conclusion:

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.

This is the true God, and eternal life ( John 5:20).

When we seek to live in obedience to the Lord and His commandments, then we learn more about how intimate our fellowship with the Lord is: We know Him, and we are in Him. And so here the Apostle John was speaking of what he had heard the Lord say years before this about a life of abiding in Christ.

But let me take you a step farther. What could possibly go beyond what

we have already seen in these wonderful verses?

**B. An obedient walk becomes a Christ-like walk (1 John 2:6).**

— (Read verse 6.)

The word “ought” suggests that this is the blessing to be expected by the child of God who consistently and lovingly seeks to please the Lord by keeping His commandments. Could we, if we had been planning our own salvation, have ever included such a possibility for those who know the Lord? But this suggests to us, doesn't it, God's purpose in saving us? He saved us to make us like His Son. *Obedience in the key!*

When we take all of the commandments of the Lord, what do they add up to? They add up to the kind of a life that our Lord lived, not only in His holiness, but also in the intimacy of His fellowship with the Lord.

**Concl:** What does obedience to our Lord's require of us? It calls upon us to forsake our own ways, and to humble ourselves before the Lord. And it calls for our personal commitment to do the will of God. This is a lot easier to talk about than it is to do it because we are so in the habit of doing what we want to do. But God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, and this is how we work out our own salvation. This is the way of blessing, this is the way of usefulness, and this is the way of the greatest possible fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. I say it again, and I hope that none of us will ever forget it, *obedience is the key! There is nothing more important in our lives than that we walk by faith, abiding in Christ, doing what He has told us in His Word that we are to do.*

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**THE COMMANDMENT -- NOT NEW, BUT OLD, YET NEW**

1 John 2:7-11

**Intro:** One of the characteristics of the way the writers of Scripture present the truth of God's Word, is that they *declare* the truth, they do not seek its acceptance by argument or reasoning. They will often explain in detail what they teach, but they do not depend upon argument to convince those to whom they are writing. And they do this both with unbelievers as well as with believers. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24,

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

We have another evidence of this type of teaching when Paul went to Athens and found on Mars Hill an altar to "an unknown God." And this is what he said to the Athenians,

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him **declare** I unto you (Acts 17:23).

Be sure to notice the word "declare." The apostles in their preaching and in their writing were not debaters; they were to proclaim the truth. They were to declare the truth. They exposed error, but it was always in the light of the declaration of the Word of God.

The same was true with the prophets of the OT. They were known for their familiar, "Thus saith the Lord." We always minimize the importance of Scripture when try to reason people into believing the Gospel, or when we try to reason with people to get them to understand the doctrine of God's sovereignty, or the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The Word is living and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword. Cf. Heb. 4:12. It accomplishes what God pleases, and never fails to accomplish what the Lord sends it forth to do. So we don't apologize for the truth of God; we simply *declare* it! We are preachers, not debaters.

This great principle which God has established for His servants is never clearer than it was in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, but close

behind Him was the beloved Apostle John. And as he wrote 1 John it is very clear that he never departed from this way of presenting the truth even throughout his long life, and throughout his many years of ministry. We present the truth as it is, and we trust the Lord to use it as He sees fit.

Now the people of the world don't like this, and they will tell us that they don't like it. You will hear people say, "You don't think that you are the only ones who have the truth, do you?" Or, "There has to be more than one way for people to get to heaven--if there is such a place." They don't understand that it is not because we are so brilliant in ourselves (because most of us are very ordinary people), but it is because we have God's Word! This book is not the product of man's wisdom; it is a revelation from God! And so we declare what God has revealed for us in His Word. We are not to do this arrogantly so as to give offense, but to declare it humbly, lovingly, and faithfully, remembering that there was a time when we did not understand any more than the people of the world understand now.

But we must not let the opposition of people cause us to change the method with which we have been charge by God. Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word," and that is the charge laid upon every generation of the Lord's people until the Lord returns. I hope we all understand this.

So far we have learned in 1 John that the Apostle John's main purpose was to show how we can have fellowship with God. He has pointed out that our fellowship with God has to be based upon Who and What God is. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). And since "light" means *righteous* and *holy*, this means that we cannot have fellowship with God if we are living in sin. That is what John pointed out in 1 John 1:6. And the first verse of chapter 2 tell us that we are not to sin. Note that John doesn't try to prove that people are sinners; he simply declares it and deals with it as the basic hindrance for man's fellowship with God.

Last Sunday we came to the first instance of John's many uses of the verb *know*. See this in chapter 2, verse 3. He taught in this epistle not only that we need to be saved from our sins, but that we can *know* that we are saved, and must *know* that we are saved. This is important if we are to enjoy fellowship with the Lord. But, in case anyone did not understand what it means to "walk in the light" (1:7), the Apostle John clarified that by pointing out that walking in the light means keeping the Lord's commandments. Where do we find these commandments? We find them in the Scriptures--all through the Word of God. And these are not for us to

discuss as to whether or not we are going to obey them, or if they really apply to us. We are to find out what they are, believe them to be the will of God, *and then do them!* There is no room for debate, or argument, or discussion here (unless it is to give us a clearer understanding of what the commandments mean). Our responsibility, with the power of the Holy Spirit, is to obey God.

*Now our text for today, verses 7 through 11, deals with one of the most basic, and, therefore, one of the most important of the commandments. This has to do with our love for each other in the family of God.*

And so we begin today with:

### **I. JOHN'S DESCRIPTION OF THIS COMMANDMENT (1 John 2:7, 8).**

Many people in reading these verses have gotten confused as to what the Apostle John was talking about because he introduced it by saying that it was not a new commandment, but it was an old commandment which they had had from the beginning, *and yet it was a new commandment!* Let me read these two verses for you. (Read 2:7, 8.)

What did the Apostle John mean?

Well, as I have mentioned, verses 9 through 11 indicate that he was speaking about loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

By the way, ladies, don't listen to those wild feminists nor to those misled men who try to re-write the Bible, or to reject certain passages of Scripture, because they speak of men only. This is consistent with the place that God has given men and women from creation itself. Men are the head of the family, and men are to be leaders in the church, but God does not overlook women. In fact, God gives women a greater place of honor than people do who would like to re-write the Bible. As you know, some are going so far today to speak of God as "she." Some people are going to have a lot to answer for when they stand in the presence of the Lord. I marvel at His longsuffering now. It may not go on much longer.

But let me return to verses 7 and 8.

How can it be said that the command for us to love each other is not new, but old, and yet new? This is where we need to examine the Scriptures to find out what the Apostle John meant.

I think most of us know that on one occasion when our Lord was here on earth, He was asked by a Pharisee what was the greatest commandment in the law, i.e., the law of Moses. He responded by giving two, not one. And neither one was one of the ten commandments. The first was that we are to love the Lord with all of heart, soul, mind, and one Gospel writer added the word “strength.” And then our Lord said that the second was like it, and obviously inseparable from it, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” That was the old commandment.

To find the new commandment we need to go to the Gospel of John, chapter 13, verses 34 and 35, where the Lord said this to His disciples while they were gathered in the Upper Room. This is what He said:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

And so you have the old and the new, but basically they are the same in their emphasis that love is one of the first characteristics of a person who knows and loves God. The Apostle John did not claim that He was giving them a commandment that was new because it was different. It was not some special revelation that had been given to the Apostle John. It was the old expressed in a new way, and in that sense it was new. But the emphasis was the same when the Apostle John wrote this epistle that it had always been. There have always been those who *professed faith in Christ*, but who did not actually *possess it*. And their lives showed that they did not have life.

“From the beginning” mentioned two times in verse 7 can mean one of three things:

- 1) “From the beginning” of time.
- 2) “From the beginning” of our Lord’s ministry.
- 3) “From the beginning” of the salvation of the people to whom the Apostle John was writing.

All three would apply, but it seems that the last of the three is the right explanation because the Apostle John said “an old commandment **which ye had from the beginning.**” And also “**the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.**” So it seems that he was speaking of their own acquaintance with the commandment.

But there was another sense in which the old was new. What was and is true of our Lord Jesus Christ, is now true also in us. The love that you

see in the Lord Jesus Christ in its character is exactly the same that you can expect to see in those who know the Lord, and abide in Him. The reason: “Because the darkness is past,” or *is passing away*, “and the true light now shineth.” It is as the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians,

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light . . .

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord (Eph. 5:8, 10).

Neither the Apostle John, nor the Apostle Paul, nor for that matter, any of the other writers of Scripture, ever present the Christian life of any person as perfect. So when the Apostle John said that *the darkness is passing away*, he meant that gradually from each believers life, the evidences of the old life are gradually decreasing, and the evidences of our new life in Christ are on the rise. How wonderful it will be when every trace of the old life is gone, and nothing but the new life remains. But that will have to wait for the time when we are finally and forever with the Lord.

In verses 9, 10, and 11 the Apostle John drew some conclusions after citing the old and new commandments, the latter being not entirely new. Let us notice what they are:

## II. SOME CONCLUSIONS (1 John 2:9-11).

### A. Some make a false claim that they belong to the Lord (v. 9).

We come here to the expression which John has used several times in chapters 1 and 2. Sometimes we read, “If we say”; at other time we read, as here, “He that saith.” These verses ought to remind us not to go alone on what people say about themselves and their relationship with the Lord; we need to see if their lives back up what they claim with their lips.

The person who claims to be “in the light,” but hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. This means he is not saved, he does not have eternal life, even though he says that he does.

What does it mean to “hate” a brother (or a sister)? It means to be critical of them. It means that you won’t help them when you have the opportunity and the means to do so. It means preferring the company of unbelievers to the company of believers. Listen to the way the news media attacks people on TV or in the newspapers, and you will have illustrations

of what it means to hate people. But the point that the Apostle John was making here is that a man who hates his brother (and I believe that this can be applied to the attitude we have toward people in the world), has never been in the light, but continues to be in darkness. And the Apostle John is very positive about this.

**B. The man who loves his brother abides in the light (v. 10).**

Notice this man does not say what he is, but he shows by his love that he “abideth in the light”--not perfectly, but consistently and increasingly.

This means that his life is directed by:

- 1) The light that comes from Christ. As the Apostle John had said in verse 6, if we abide in Him we are going to walk like He walked, not to the same extent because His life was perfect, but we will be living the same kind of life.
- 2) But to abide in the light means also to live by the Word of God, keeping the commandments of the Lord.

So it follows that the more obedient a child of God is, the more he will manifest of the love of God. As I said last week, *obedience is the key to a life pleasing to God, to a life that is Christ-like.*

“And there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” It is the person who claims to be a child of God, on the one hand, but, on the other, fails to give any evidence in his life that he knows the Lord, who is a stumbling-block. A person who really knows the Lord is a new creature in Christ. The old is passing away; all things are becoming new. And he doesn’t need to tell people that there has been a change in him because they can see the evidence. This doesn’t mean that they necessarily want to be saved, but it means, as the Apostle Peter said in his first epistle,  
Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you (1 Pet. 4:4).

How wonderful it is to be able to see that a person “abideth in the light.” The course of his life is directed by the Word of God, but the commandments of the Lord, and not by whatever may be the current trend in the world at any given time. However, it will help to keep us humble in heart if we remember that we have not always been what we are now, and that we would be just like people in the world if God in His grace had not rescued us from our sins. We need to keep in mind what Paul told Titus in Titus 3:3-7:

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish,  
disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,  
living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

All that we have in Christ, we have by the grace of God. We didn't earn any of it, now did we deserve any of it. And yet we now are heirs of eternal life.

In verse 11 the Apostle John returns to the person he was describing in verse 9.

### **C. The description of the one who hates his brother (v. 11).**

What a description this is of an unbeliever, but it is tragic when this is still true of one who claims to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

There are three things that the Apostle John says about one who hates his brother. And the same is true of one who is in the world and who makes no claim of being even religious:

- 1) He is in darkness.
- 2) He doesn't know where he is going.
- 3) He is blind--spiritually blind.

So a person in the church without Christ, is no different from a person out of the church without Christ. How descriptive this is of people in the world. They are in the dark. They don't know where they are going. And they are spiritually blinded. How could anyone picture a more hopeless condition? And yet these are the people who either don't care and don't want to know, or they are sure that they know all that they need to know and are in complete control of their lives and their destiny. We know that it is only through the preaching of the Gospel that their eyes can be opened, and their lives changed.

**Concl:** How important it is that we all examine our hearts and look at our lives to make sure that we are abiding in the light, and that the new-old commandment is being fulfilled in us day by day. What we say about ourselves is not important unless there is evidence in our lives that the profession we make is true. Again let me say that this is a matter of the greatest importance, and we must know that our profession is true.

**CHILDREN, FATHERS, AND YOUNG MEN**

1 John 2:12-14

**Intro:** My text for today is verses 12 through 14 in 1 John 2. In these verses you can see that the Apostle John addresses three groups two times: children, fathers, and young men. The main reason I see for the repetition is that the Apostle John was seeking to emphasize the importance of what he was writing. And I am indebted to Dr. Richard Lenski for the suggestion that in these three verses the Apostle was preparing his readers for the warning that he was going to give them in verses 15 through 17 about the world.

We have a similar situation in the verses we had just before the verses we are considering today. Verses 7 and 8 prepare the way for the warning that the Apostle John gave in verses 9 through 11. Let me explain myself a little more in detail.

We have seen that the Apostle John was writing concerning our fellowship with “the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” according to what we read in chapter 1. This is the purpose of this epistle: FELLOWSHIP.

However, it is one thing to talk about fellowship, but another for us to enjoy that fellowship. There are many things that oppose our fellowship with God, and our fellowship with each other. The two are inseparably bound together. We can't have fellowship with each other if we are not in fellowship with God. In the same way, broken fellowship with each other speaks of broken fellowship with God. So we need to know the dangers we face day by day that would mar and interrupt our fellowship with God and with each other.

In chapter 1 we saw that we can't claim to have fellowship with the Godhead if we are walking in darkness--which amounts to living in sin of some kind. In the beginning of chapter 2, especially in verses 3 through 6 we learned that obedience is a vital part of fellowship. The person who claims to know God but who does not keep the commandments of God's Word is a liar. Disobedience hinders our fellowship. That statement needs to be made stronger. Disobedience destroys our fellowship, and if we have never lived in obedience to God it is a lie for us to claim that we have fellowship with Him.

Verses 7 and 8 of chapter two tell us about the old commandment and the new commandment which basically is the same--that we who know the Lord should love each other. If we do not love each other, we cannot

honestly speak of being in fellowship with God.

So we have these possible hindrances to our fellowship with the Lord, and to the very real possibility that such problems may be an indication that we do not really know the Lord.

Now, as we come to verses 12 through 14 which I want to consider with you today, we are approaching another real problem concerning our ← fellowship with God--and this is *a love for the world*. The Apostle John will tell us in the latter part of verse 15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This means that the person who prefers the world to everything else, cannot be a Christian. But it is possible for a Christian to come to a time in his life when his, or her, affections are turned to the world and the things of the world. So the statements in verses 12 through 14 serve to introduce the warning that we will consider beginning next Sunday, the Lord willing. But more than simply introducing that warning, these statements are intended to protect us from our tendency to love the world and the things of the world. And the Apostle John is so greatly concerned that he addressed the "children" two times, the "fathers" two times, and the "young men" two times! Once in each case was not enough.

There have been a number of different explanations about whom the Apostle John had in mind in each case. I am not going to take the time to mention what those explanations have been. I am going to give you what seems to me to be the only reasonable explanation. I believe that the Apostle John was speaking about the whole family of God. Furthermore, I believe that he was recognizing that in the family of God you have people at different stages of growth, or spiritual maturity. Some are children who have just recently come to know the Lord. Sometimes, as in the case of the Corinthian church, you find those sad cases of people who know the Lord, but have never grown in their faith. So spiritually they are still children.

Then you have those who are spiritual fathers. They are not only the most mature, but they have been instrumental in leading others to Christ. This is what the Apostle Paul was speaking about when he wrote to the Corinthian church, and said this:

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15).

Paul was not married, and so he did not have any children in the flesh. But spiritually he did have children, and his children were those whom he

had led to Christ. To the Galatians Paul said this:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until  
Christ be formed in you (Gal. 4:19).

Perhaps this is one reason why the Apostle John said “my little children” twice in this epistle (2:1; 3:18), and “little children” five times (2:12, 28; 3:7; 4:4; 5:21). It may have been that the Apostle John was writing to those whom, for the most part, he had led to Christ.

Let me indicate something else about the terms which Paul used here. Since we would all recognize that when you speak of “children,” you are speaking of both boys and girls, so when he said “fathers” he meant those who were spiritual mothers as well as spiritual fathers, and when he said young men, he was also including young women. In each case male and female were included.

There is another point that I want to make regarding the six statements that we find in these three verses. You will notice that in the first four our KJ translators have said, “I write.” In the last two we see “I have written.” Many MSS have as the last statement in verse 13, “I have written unto you, little children . . .” This is the way it is translated in the NASB.

Why the difference between the first part and the second part? Why did he say “I am writing” and also “I have written”? The best answer that I can come up with is because that is probably what he had done. He was not writing to them about this for the first time, but he had written to them before to each group, children, fathers, and young men, separately and about the same great truths. It would not have been in a book which belonged in Scripture, but as was the case with the Apostle Paul, we know that they wrote letters which were not given by inspiration by God although they contained the truth.

Let me point out one more thing before we consider these groups individually. The fact that the Apostle John wrote separately to all three groups is an indication that all three groups needed to be on their guard against the tendency to love the world and the things of the world. We are never so mature in Christ but what we can relax our guard. We might say that it is no surprise when children fall, but it is just as possible for fathers (and mothers) in the faith to fall, and the same can be said about strong, growing young men and young women in the Lord. We all need to be on our guard against the world, the flesh, and the Devil as long as we live on this earth. The Apostle Paul put no limitations on his exhortation:

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the

power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13).

In a similar way, there are no age nor time limitations on 1 John 2:15.

Now, in the time that remains, let us look at each of the three groups. First, we turn our attention to those who are children in the faith.

### **I. CHILDREN (1 John 2:12, 13b).**

These two statements tell us two great and precious truths which every child of God knows, or certainly should know. We should justly wonder if a person is saved if they do not know these truths.

- 1) They know that their sins have been forgiven. Cf. v. 12.
- 2) They have known that God is their Father. They know that they are in the family of God. Cf. v. 13b--v. 14 in the Gk. text.

People who are in the world and who belong to the world, have neither. In fact, loving the world always leads to more sinning. The world can never offer us the forgiveness of sins. The people of the world do not know anything about the peace and joy that comes to us in knowing that we belong to God and that He is our heavenly Father.

And notice how the Apostle John touched on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our sins are not forgiven because we are sorry for what we have done, nor because we did not realize what we were doing at the time we sinned. Forgiveness does not come that way. We are forgiven on account of, or for the sake of, His Name. Whose Name? The Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look back to 1 John 1:7 and you will see that “the blood of Jesus Christ,” God’s “Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” When you and I are inclined to feel that our sins are not so bad, think of what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ in order for God to be able to declare that we are forgiven, and that our sins will be remembered against us no more. The world with all of its psychology and all of its attempt at reformation, cannot erase one sin that is charged against you before God. No church, no priest, has the right to forgive you. Only in Christ is there forgiveness

and cleansing.

And the Apostle John said, I wrote to you before telling you, not just that you know *God* (although he could have said that), but he said that you “have known the Father”! You are in His family. You belong to the Lord. You are to love Him, not the world. You are to love Him with all of your being--your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength. There is to be no place in your heart for the world.

I remember when I was in high school and going out for the evening with my friends, one of the last things my mother would call out to me was, “Remember Whose you are.” She meant, “Don’t forget that you belong to the Lord, and be sure to do only what a child of God should do.”

The Apostle John was indicating that these two, simple truths would prove to be safeguards against loving the world and getting involved in the lusts of the flesh. Oh, how thankful we all should be that God has forgiven our sins because of Christ’s death for us, and that we are now and forever members of His family. The world will only add to our sins, and increase the feeling of guilt in our hearts.

And let me remind any who say that they don’t want doctrine; they only want practical truth. The Apostle John was saying here that in times of temptation, it is doctrine which holds us back from sin.

What about fathers, spiritual fathers?

## **II. FATHERS (1 John 2:13a, 14a).**

To the fathers the Apostle John said the same thing twice--“Ye have known him that is from the beginning.”

To whom was the Apostle John referring when he said, “Ye have known him that is from the beginning”? Verses 1, 2, and 3 of chapter 1 indicate that he was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, even after you and I have known the Lord a long time, and have had the privilege of bringing others to Christ, we never get beyond the place where there is anything more important in our lives than that we know, not *about* the Lord, *but that we know HIM!*

My pastor at in my home church used to correct people on the spot when they quoted 2 Tim. 1:12 by saying, “I know in whom I have believed...” What Paul said was, “I know **whom** I have believed.” The life of fellow-

ship is a life in which we have a growing personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And the more mature we are in the Lord, the better we will know Him. But even fathers and mothers in the faith can grow careless about their fellowship with the Lord. Bible reading can become just a habit. Prayer can become only a routine that we have been going through for years. We can get careless about our obedience to the Word of God. The world still holds an attraction for us. That is when you see even spiritual fathers fall. A father in the faith has no greater need than to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Lastly, we come to young men and young women.

### **III. YOUNG MEN (1 John 2:13m, 14b).**

Young men and young women are examples of vitality and strength. What a pleasure it is to see people growing in the Lord, and winning the battle against “the wicked one” and the temptations that “the wicked one” places before them. In John’s third epistle he said this in verse 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” He was probably speaking of his spiritual children (although the same would certainly apply to our natural children who know the Lord).

However, past and present victories do not guarantee that we will be victorious in the future. When you put John’s first statement to the “young men” along side of his second statement, you see that in the second statement he added, “because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you.” What is the problem that makes growing, strong believers, in danger where the world is concerned?

I would say that it is when they forget that our strength comes from the Lord, and not from ourselves, and it is a strength which is ours because the Word of God is abiding in us. That is different from merely reading the Word. That is different from merely trusting in the knowledge of Scripture that we have. To have the Word of God abiding in us means that through reading and meditation and obedience we make it our own, and that we remember that every day we need to find fresh supplies of strength and wisdom in the Word of God.

I have been listening to Dr. Lewis Johnson’s messages which he brought to us last year at Family Camp. And I was impressed again the way he stressed the fact that we are not just to be strong, but to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” How easy it is for us, like Samson,

to forget where our strength comes from. It is only “in the Lord” that we can really be strong, and the Holy Spirit gives us this strength by the Word abiding in us. Let a young man, or young woman, in the Lord forget this, and instead of overcoming the wicked one, he will find that the wicked one will overcome him.

**Concl:** I will leave it up to you to decide what category you are in spiritually. The important thing, however, is to see the place that these verses have in this epistle. We all are in danger of being lured away from lives of close, personal fellowship with the Lord, by our love for the world. The world exercises a most powerful influence on all of us, but we are not all affected in the same way. With some it can mean falling into disgraceful sins--or sins we think of most disgraceful. With others it can mean selfish ambition for position, power, pleasure. Pride is one mark of a worldly person, and this is practically encouraged in the church today.

It is the truth of the Word that we need. It is the application of the Word to our lives. It is a growing hunger to know the Lord in a more personal and intimate way. It is in remembering what it cost our Lord to provide salvation for us, and the love which prompted God to send His Son, and the love which caused our Lord to come to die for our sins. It is in remembering that we are in the family of God, and that we are to behave in the world as those who belong to the Lord. May God enable us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and that we remember that we have no strength to stand against the enemy, the wicked one, except the strength that we find in the Lord.