

“THE WORD OF LIFE”

1 John 1:1-4

Intro: 1 John is one of the five books which are found in the Bible which were written by the Apostle John. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, two books (the Gospel of John and the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ), and three letters, or epistles – 1, 2, and 3 John (the main difference being their length).

We learned last week that one special fact of importance about both the Gospel of John, and the epistles of John is that they represent the mature conviction of the Apostle John some sixty or so years after the ascension of Christ. He was still convinced that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God, that He was the Messiah, or Christ, that He had lived a perfect life, performed more miracles than any other individual ever had, that He really died on the Cross, that He was raised from the dead, and that He ascended back to heaven in His body, and that He had given His disciples the promise that He was coming again. This evidence, especially in the Gospel of John, but supported by 1 John and the book of the Revelation, is of the greatest significance. If there had been any way in which John had simply been carried away emotionally by the Lord, but that none of the above facts was really true, the convictions in John’s mind and heart would have changed during the long time. There is no evidence in the Bible that any of the other apostles was still living, so we see what an important work the Holy Spirit had done in causing John to write as He did. 1 John is not only a vital part of all of God’s Word, but it represents the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ after many years had gone by.

So what the Apostle John was doing was to confirm that what Matthew, Mark, Luke, James, Peter, and Jude had written, was the absolute truth of God!

The Apostle John said in the Gospel of John why he had written it. And he did the same in 1 John. His purpose in writing the Gospel of John is recorded for us in John 20:30 and 31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the One through

whom we can have eternal life, is beyond any question in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is the first book that a non-Christian should read. It is designed to bring people to Christ.

The first epistle of John which we are going to be studying in the next weeks and months, also was written for a specific purpose. It was written for those who were trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation, to show them how they could “know” that they were saved. The Apostle John’s actual words are found in the verse that we considered together last Lord’s Day. It is stated in 1 John 5:13:

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

If we are truly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the evidence will be seen in what we believe, and in the way we live. And the Apostle John, led by the Spirit of God, has told us in these five chapters how we can clearly know that we are saved. So the Gospel of John gives us the foundation of what it means to be a Christian; the first epistle of John tells us how we can sure that we are saved.

I think that it was Dr. Ironside who said that in the Gospel of John we see eternal life manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ; in 1 John we see eternal life manifested in the people of God. But even in 1 John eternal life is spoken of as resulting from the believer’s relationship with Christ. We have eternal life because we have Christ.

Now in the first century there arose a group of heretics which had a big influence on those early churches. They became known as Gnostics, and there were various groups of them. They tried to combine the teaching of the apostles with Greek and Oriental philosophies. We all know that *agnostic* is one who says that we can’t really know that there is a God, but the Gnostics claimed to know more than what the apostles were teaching. And the controversy usually, or often, centered upon our Lord. There were those who taught that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, but that He became Christ when the Spirit descended upon Him following His baptism, and departed from Him when He was on the Cross and said, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Another group said that Jesus Christ was not a real human being, that He was just a bodiless spirit. If you would reach out to touch Him, there was nothing there. They felt that the body was evil, and that Deity would not dwell in that which was evil.

Of course, both of these ideas were antichrist, against Christ. They were against the apostle's teaching about Christ, and, as such, they were an assault on the doctrine of salvation. If these heresies were true, either one of them, or any other departure from Scripture would be true, then we do not have a Savior and there is no such thing as salvation from sin.

Now it was because of these heresies that the Apostle John began this epistle the way he did. He did not mention the groups. Evidently their teaching was well known. But behind what John wrote was the teaching of the Gnostics. And so in verses 1 and 2, and down through the first clause of verse 3 we see that the Apostle John, in very strong terms, was teaching:

I. THE TRUE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST (1 John 1:-3a).

The Apostle John began with a statement that had to do with the eternal nature of our Lord, really a statement of His Deity.

It is often said that there are three books of the Bible that begin with the word "beginning." They are Genesis 1:1; John 1:1; and 1 John 1:1.

(Read and comment.) Go back to the beginning of time and you find that God already there. He is without beginning. He predated creation. And the Apostle John in His Gospel was declaring in this statement the Deity of our Lord. God is eternal, and Jesus Christ is eternal, and the Holy Spirit is eternal.

John used this word in 1 John nine times (1:1; 2:7 (2x), 13, 14, 24(2x); 3:8, 11). The context determines the meaning, but the use of this word indicates that there had been no change whatever beginning John might have been talking about.

Then John spoke of his own relationship with the Lord. He had "heard" the Lord, so he knew that the Lord spoke. He "saw" the Lord. And He had touched the Lord, which he could not have done if the Lord had only been a bodyless spirit. The second of the two words for sight seems to indicate how astonished John was when he realized who the Lord really was. And he was not speaking as though all of this happened at once, but that he was convinced in stages that Jesus was really God in human flesh!

And then he called the Lord, "the Word of life."

I think that most of you know that the Apostle John is the only one in the Bible who spoke of the Lord as “the Word.” See John 1:1 (3x), 14; 1 John 1:1; 5:7 (which is questionable); Rev. 19:13.

“The Word of life” is a term that has been explained in different ways, but it seems to me that the Apostle John was saying that this is a title the Lord. He is “the Lord, the life.” He is the Living Lord. He is the One Who gives life. As the epistle brings out John was not talking about our physical life, but spiritual life, eternal life. This verse surely indicates how important it is to understand who Jesus Christ was, and is, because He alone has the life that we need. As the Word, He is the message Who was sent to convey that message on earth. Christ is our life; the life that we have from God, is Christ. We don’t have divine life until we have Christ. As 1 John 5:11 and 12 tell us,

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

In verse 2, two times, the Apostle John says how he came to know and to understand the unique character of the Lord Jesus – at the beginning of the verse, and again at the end of it. It was all “manifested” to him. But notice that all through these verses the Apostle John was speaking in the first person plural, “we.” He was evidently speaking on behalf of all of the apostles. It was not something that just “he” heard, and saw, and a Person that he alone touched, but it was the testimony of all of the apostles. So the evidence was unquestionable!

The apostles did not come to this understanding on their own, by themselves. But it was revealed to them. God opened their eyes to see and their ears to hear, and enabled them to know that this was the greatest of all realities. When they say Jesus, and heard Jesus, in all their association with Him, they realized that He was life, eternal life, to use John’s own words, “the Word of life.”

But it was not that this life was manifested to John and the other apostles for them to enjoy and to keep for themselves, but it was that they might “show unto you,” the people of God, “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

I want to call your attention to the word “shew” as it appears in the AV,

but it is the old English word spelling for our word *s-h-o-w*. So pronounce it like it was *s-h-o-w*. It means to declare plainly a message that they had been commissioned to deliver to the people of God. That is what the Apostle John had spent his life doing. That is what he was doing as he wrote this epistle. But he was also delivering the message by the way he was living.

Salvation means that Christ is our life. It means that we are learning to live the life of Christ. The Apostle Peter called Christ our Example in His suffering, and that is true. But the Apostle John tells us that to be saved is to have Christ living in us. Our lives are being changed to look more and more like the way Christ lived, not by imitation, but by identification.

And how is this accomplished? Look with me now at verse three.

The Apostle John said that he was telling us what the apostles had all seen and heard “that ye also may fellowship with us.” That might sound like pride until you go on to read the rest of the verse: “And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

I spoke briefly last Sunday about that word “fellowship,” but I want to come back to it again. What is “fellowship”? Note that it was fellowship first with the apostles, but only because their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Through the years of John’s life, he had learned to walk in fellowship with God and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This began as they observed the Lord and the way He lived. It continued as they heard Him teach the truths of God, and how those truths were to be applied in their own lives. But as they learned the truth, they learned that they were in a spiritual partnership with the God and with Christ, and that they had access to all that was in God to enable them to live like the Lord wanted them to live.

There is a little verse in 1 Thessalonians that I wonder if we have really paid as much attention to it as we should. It is in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Paul had just given a series of commandments which all of us need to take seriously, but none of us has kept them perfectly. I am talking about Paul’s instruction for us to “rejoice evermore.” And then to “pray without ceasing.” And then “in every thing” to give thanks. I don’t know about you, but my record in obeying those instructions is very poor at the best.

But the good part about those verses is that at the end, in verse 24, Paul said, “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” Now this does not mean that I can forget about reading my Bible, and forget about praying, and forget about meeting with the Lord’s people, and the Lord will take care of it all. No, it doesn’t mean that. But it means that as you and I walk in fellowship with the Lord, looking for Him to give us the desire to do His will *and the ability to do it*, in His faithfulness He will enable us to do what He has commanded us to do. The Christian life is a life that is impossible to live IF we are only going on our resources. But the Lord does not tell us what to do, and then watch us to see how well we do. He knows that we will fail unless we are really walking in fellowship with Him as moment by moment He imparts His life to us and in us.

Remember 1 Corinthians 1:9 which I gave to you last Sunday. (Quote.)

Now we are in a position to understand 1 John 1:4.

Some MSS read “your joy,” and others read “our joy.” The preference seems to be to “our joy.” But either way it is true. But John was showing how deeply his joy was connected with their progress in learning to live the life which is Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul expressed the same attitude when he wrote to the Thessalonians because in chapter 3 and verse 8 he wrote, “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” What would it do to Trinity Bible Church if we were so concerned about our fellowship with each other and with the Lord that we could say, and mean it from our hearts, that my joy can’t be complete unless you are really walking in fellowship with the Lord.

Concl: May our study of this wonderful epistle cause us to experience greater blessing in our fellowship with the Lord, and a greater love for each other as we learn more about what it means to live His life.