

WHAT DOES OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD MEAN?

1 John 1

Intro: We learned last week that the first epistle of John has to do with fellowship, fellowship with God primarily, but also fellowship with each other in our relationship with God. And when we say God, we mean the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Basic to that fellowship is the knowledge that we are saved. And so as we read through the epistle we learn that the Apostle John has given us various tests by which we can be assured that we are saved, that is, that we really know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

But before we go any farther, let me raise and answer the question, What does the word *fellowship* mean? After we have answered that, we will be in a position to know what *fellowship with God* means.

Many Christians know that the Greek word for *fellowship* is **κοινωνία**. If you look up the word in an English dictionary, you will quickly see that what it means in Greek, it also means in English. But, of course, there is no relationship in the world that exactly parallels what the word means among those of us who know the Lord.

Fellowship in Scripture speaks of a relationship, an intimate relationship. It speaks of a unique relationship. The people of the world do not share in this relationship. It is only for the people of God. But among us there are none who can claim to have a closer than others. There are times when we may not walk in close fellowship with the Lord, but we all have the same opportunity for constant, day by day and moment by moment fellowship with the Lord. The Apostle John did not claim that he had a special relationship to the Lord because he was an apostle that other believers did not have. We all stand on the same ground in our relationship with the Lord and in the unspeakable privilege of fellowship with the Members of the Godhead. If a child of God is not living in fellowship with the Lord, it is his fault, not because he does not have access to the Lord.

But now I want to raise a question that I just started to deal with last Sunday, and it is the question, “How is it that we have this fellowship when others don’t know anything about it, and wouldn’t want it if they did? The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 1:9. That verse was written to the believers in the church at Corinth, but it applies to all people who are

trusting Christ for their salvation. Every one of you who are trusting Christ for your salvation can say that this verse speaks of you. Salvation is truly have been called into fellowship with God's Son, "Jesus Christ our Lord. Listen to the verse, 1 Corinthians 1:9:

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

Now this is a very important verse when we are seeking to learn what fellowship is. Actually fellowship with Jesus Christ is what salvation is.

Now look at this verse for a moment. We did not seek this relationship with Jesus Christ. God called us into the fellowship. It was not our idea; it was God's sovereign call to each one of us individually. We did not initially seek God; He had chosen us, and He called us, and we came into this wonderful relationship with Jesus Christ, and we are kept right there by the faithfulness of God.

Think of this for a moment. There is no one as dear to the Father as His Son is. God finds all of His delight in His Son. Now you and I who are parents are concerned about who our children have as their friends. We don't want our children to be led astray. Now think about who we are by nature. We are sinners by nature and so often sinners by choice. We know that the usual thing that happens is that the bad pulls the good down, not the other way around. Why would God call you and me into fellowship with His Son? Isn't it possible that we could corrupt His Son? We know that the answer to that question is, No! We are not going to corrupt our Lord, but He is going to transform us into His likeness by cleansing us from our sins, giving us life eternal, and drawing us into fellowship with Himself so that in that fellowship we are being changed to be made like the Son of God is. That is what salvation is. And the Holy Spirit prefaced this statement by reminding us that "God is faithful," and so He is personally going to see that we reap all of the benefits that are provided for us through fellowship with Jesus Christ. It is not that Christ is called into our fellowship, but that we are called into His fellowship, *so He is the One Who sets the terms of our fellowship*. And that is what 1 John is all about.

Now fellowship speaks of a special, personal relationship that we have with the Person with Whom we have fellowship. God has worked in our hearts so that a Christian can be identified by His agreement with Christ. This does not take place overnight, but we are brought into this fellowship by a new birth, and we are to spend our lives learning to know our

Lord better, and learning to agree with Him about what is essential to our fellowship with Him, and what is to be totally rejected if we are to make progress in this life of fellowship with Christ, and also with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. This fellowship is not a lodge. It is not a political party. It is not a civic organization. It is not a world organization like the so-called United Nations. *But it is a family, the family of God, and He is our Father, and it is His purpose that we should all show the family resemblance which is to be like His eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So God Himself has set the terms of our fellowship, and this is what we have in 1 John, expressed so perfectly by the Apostle John, stated not just once, but over and over again so that we will not forget any of it.*

So there is another point about fellowship that is important for us to recognize. It is the element of agreement. In Amos 3:3 we find a very important question that has to do with fellowship, and especially as it relates to 1 John. The question is, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

Now who sets the terms of our agreement with each other in the family of God? Do the Baptists? Do the Catholics? Do the independent Bible churches? Do the Mormons? Do the Pentecostals? The suggestions can go on and on. There are certainly some churches where you are more likely to hear the terms of agreement which must be upheld if there is to be true fellowship with God. But the true answer to the terms of our fellowship with God are all to be found in one place. And that place is in the Bible, the Word of God.

Now I want to point out the terms that we are to agree on if we are to know and enjoy and make progress in fellowship with God.

The first and most important basis of true fellowship with Christ and with God is that which the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ. That is where the Apostle John began, and a point he returns to because of its supreme importance.

Last week I spent some time on the first two verses of this letter. In fact, it is so important that the Apostle John did not begin the normal way of writing a letter in his day. The Apostle John began by mentioning how false teachers had already appeared, who were teaching the wrong things about the Son of God. There never has been a person like the Lord Jesus

Christ Who lived and walked on this earth. The Apostle John wrote toward the end of the first century. He wrote the Gospel which bears his name. He wrote the three epistles of John. And he wrote the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Read the first eighteen verses of the first chapter of John's Gospel, and you will learn the truth about the Lord Jesus. Read his purpose in writing the Gospel of John and John 20:30-31. There can be no deviation from what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ is we are to have fellowship with God. In your reading of 1 John note how the Apostle John keeps coming back to Who Jesus Christ was, and what He did to redeem us from our sins. You come to the Cross in verse 7 as the only remedy for human sin. There can be no fellowship with God if a teacher denies Who Jesus Christ was, and is, and what He did when He died on the Cross. And the same requirements have to do with the Biblical teach about God and the Holy Spirit.

A second requirement for a just claim that a person has fellowship with God, is that we must accept the reality of sin. Read 1 John 1:5-10. If you want to find out what the world feels about sin, just mention the word, and you will see how people despise even the word *sin*. The Apostle John makes it clear right here in chapter 1 that if you are living in sin, then don't claim to have fellowship with God. Both the OT and the NT speak of the reality of sin. Sin is any and everything that is displeasing to God. And it is sin which brings, not the blessing of God, but the judgment. Of all of the problems we have in the United States, the great-est one is sin. Sin brings on all of the other problems we have.

And then a third term of true fellowship with God is to be found in the commandments of Scripture. The only people who can possibly keep the commandments of Scripture is a true Christian. Keeping the commandments means living by the Word of God. There are positive commandments, telling us what to do, and there are negative commandments telling us what we are not to do. And the object of obedience to the commandments of Scripture is to please the Lord. When I was a boy, it was practically impossible to find a home where there was no Bible. But you find people today who have not held a Bible in their hands, and many who have never seen a Bible. If you claim to be a Christian, your life should show that you want to be like Jesus Christ. That is the reason that the commandments have been given to us.

The fourth description that the Apostle John mentions, and places particular emphasis on is that they will love the people of God. They love to

be with them. They love to be with God's family. They like to talk about God and the Word of God. They like to go to church. Their close friends are members of the family of God. These are the people who talk about heaven, and who are looking for the Lord's return. They marvel at the love of God for them. See 1 John 3:1-3.

A fifth thing that characterizes a person who is living in fellowship with God, is that he is not going to live like the people of this world live. The Apostle John identifies the world as being composed of three things: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is not the kind of a world that God created, but this is what sin has done to a world that has turned away from God. The person who loves the ways of the people who live lives without any concern for God and His will, cannot be living in fellowship with God.

Concl: As I got to this place in my study, I turned away from my notes and from my computer, and read through 1 John again. And I saw again how the Apostle John came back to these five points that I have been pointing out today. And I thought about how high the Apostle John has set a life of fellowship with God. And I have to confess that it's still a goal that I am seeking to reach. How blessed we should be that the Lord did not wait for us to come to Him, but He set His heart on going after you and me, chose us, called us, saved us, and all of our lives has been working to perfect us in a life of fellowship with Him. None of us is there yet. We are not as devoted to the Lord Jesus as we ought to be. We don't hate sin the way we ought to hate it. We aren't as obedient as we ought to be. We don't love each other the way we ought to love. The World still has too much of an influence on our lives. But we can be thankful that our full enjoyment of fellowship with God is the greatest certainty in our lives. But it all takes time. We make progress step by step. Sometimes we stumble, but we are moving closer and closer to the Lord all of the time. If not, let us seek God's grace more than ever before that by our lives we may show the joy and peace that fellowship with God brings into our lives. Perhaps a section from the Proverbs of Solomon will help us to realize where the danger is, and what our confidence must be. I am reading Proverbs 4:13-19:

13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her;
for she is thy life.

14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the
way of evil men.

15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Let us remember that what God requires of us, He enables us to do. And that greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.