

THE CHILD OF GOD AND SIN

1 John 1:5-10

Intro: The dominant theme of 1 John is fellowship with God. And when we speak of God in a context like this, we include all Three Persons of the Godhead - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And yet, at the same time, fellowship with God the Father certainly has the main emphasis. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ and His work as our Savior that we have fellowship with God, and the Holy Spirit certainly has a major part in our fellowship with God by His work from day to day in our hearts as believers. It really is an amazing subject - *fellowship with God!* As I have said many times, if we had had a part in designing our salvation, we could never have conceived the glorious salvation which God ordained not only for His glory, but also for our eternal good and day by day blessing. We know that the Apostle John was guided by the Holy Spirit in what he wrote in this epistle, but we can also say that, in his old age, this was the message that was burning in his heart to make sure that all of us as the children of God not only understood the depth and glory of our salvation, but that he wanted to make sure that all of us understood what it means to be saved, and that we are enjoying the Lord every day of our lives.

Now looking back for a moment or two, we see that the proper foundation of our fellowship with God is having a true understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who Jesus really was, the eternal Son of God Who came to earth as a true human being, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of a virgin mother, without in any way ceasing to be God, God the Son. There always have been and always will be false teachers who have denied either all or part of what I have just said about our Lord. But if it is not true that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, then we have no salvation, nor can there be any such thing as fellowship with the one, true, living God. This is what the Apostle John was talking about in the first three verses of 1 John, chapter 1. And I am sure that you have noticed in your reading of this epistle, this is not the only time that he wrote of this subject in this, his first epistle. Believing in the true and perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus, as well as His Deity, is foundation to a life of fellowship with God and with Jesus Christ Himself.

Now look at verse 4. I believe that this applies both to what John had written in the first three verses, but also what he went on to say in verses 6 and following. In fact, I would say that it applies to this whole epistle.

The Lord often spoke of a fulness of joy. Every normal person on earth wants to be happy. We spend our lives seeking for things that are going to give us real pleasure. That is why money is such a snare to us. Many people will do anything to get their hands on as much money as they can, thinking that you can buy joy. It is true that we all need money, but if you think that money is going to buy joy, you are completely mistaken. Other people think that power and authority will give them joy. But that is a dead-end road too. We all are thankful for good health, but if that becomes our object in life, we are on the wrong track. Some of the happiest people that you will meet are people who have serious health problems.

The Apostle John tells us that fulness of joy comes through fellowship with God and with Christ. Read the first ten verses of John 15 carefully, and then read verse 11 of the same chapter. What did the Lord say in verse 11? He said this:

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

That ought to put John 14, 15, and 16 on your “must read” list. If you do, when you come to John 16:24 you will read this. These are words of the Lord Jesus. He said this:

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

Going back into the OT, we find these words from King David in Psalm 16:11:

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.

That verse probably has to do with what the children of God experience when they die and go to be with the Lord. But it can also mean the fruit of a life lived in fellowship with the Lord here on earth.

A full joy is a complete joy. It requires nothing else to be complete. But one way it can be increased is to increase our capacity for it. And that is what happens when we learn to find our joy in the Lord. “The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy . . .” It is not only joy, but it is joy! So a verse like 1 John 1:4 is like printing the whole epistle in large, bold letters, and then under-ling it all for the person who is really looking for true joy. Remember that the Apostle John was getting his message from the Spirit of God..

Now in verse 5 we have the first major point to remember in our quest for

fellowship with God. This is foundational! The Apostle did not want us to miss this. I don't want to miss it, and I don't want you to miss it. We all have a natural, God-given desire for joy, but sin has so corrupted us that we are inclined to begin with ourselves, not with God! We start with our needs instead of starting with God.

Our generation of professing Christians has been especially bad about this. We appeal to people on the assumption that we are going to meet their needs, or what they feel to be their needs. And so all kinds of programs have been devised to meet people's needs, and we depend upon the people to tell us what their needs are, and so we set out to meet their needs. We all are inclined to think that we know what our basic needs are, and the best way to correct them.

I had a doctor brother who was not only a good doctor, but he was a very devoted Christian. The Lord took him to heaven back in 1977 when he was only fifty. People whom I have never met before still tell me how much he meant to them. He had a lady come to him with a sick child. Before he had a chance to look at the child, she started to tell him what the problem was, and she went into great detail about her child. M. L. (as he was known) listened to all that she had to say, and then finally he asked her, "And what do you think that *we* should do about this?" She had the problem diagnosed, and, of course, that was his job. I don't know if she ever got the point, but that is the way we all often are with the Lord. We go to Him and tell Him our problem, and then even tell Him what we want Him to do for us, instead of listening to Him so that He can tell us what is wrong, and what the solution is.

You see, and this is very important, the Apostle John said that we don't begin with ourselves; we must always begin with God. What we look upon as our problem, or problems, may simply be symptoms of a greater problem. Our fellowship with the Lord is not based upon what we think our needs are. Our fellowship with the Lord is based upon Who He is! We do not decide the basis of our fellowship with God. He has already established it, and the Apostle John seems to indicate that the Lord Jesus made that perfectly clear when He was here on earth. If we as His people are to have fellowship with God, we do not determine what the terms are, or will be, God has already determined the foundation of our fellowship. It is God Himself. And you will notice that even the Apostle John had to learn this. Notice that the Apostle John who had walked with the Lord for many years said in so many words, "This is the message that we heard

from Him, and which He has commissioned to tell you. What was the message? “That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” John had heard it from Christ Himself, and here he was passing the message onto us, the readers.

“Light” is a symbol in the Bible for holiness; “darkness” is a symbol for sin. If God is light, and He is, and in Him is no darkness at all, this means that God is a holy God, and that there is no sin in Him at all. There never has been any sin in Him, and there never will be. It is not that he could sin, but He never has, but the Apostle John is saying that He is incapable of sin. There is no sin in Him. And you remember that the Lord Jesus sent out a challenge to His enemies saying, “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John 8:46). The word “convinceth” should be translated *convicteth*. The NIV translates it, “can prove me guilty of sin.” And the Lord said on another occasion, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). And also, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

The Apostle John had had probably close to sixty years to think over all of the teaching he had received from the Lord Jesus, and now in his old age he was just as convinced as ever about the Deity of the Lord Jesus. There never was a person like the Lord Jesus Christ before He came to earth, and there have been none like Him since He went back to heaven.

Now if we are to have fellowship with God, and with Christ, it has to be on God’s terms. We have to be holy. We do not have a perfect record like the Father has, or even as the Son has Who came to earth as a Man. And yet we have been called into a life of fellowship with God and with Christ. How can that be? It seems impossible for a holy God to have fellowship with us who are still sinners.

Last week in our Tuesday Class where we are studying the epistle of Paul to the church at Ephesus, and which was to be circulated among other churches in that area of Asia Minor, we learned that, from the foundation of the world, God has chosen us that we should be holy and without blame before Him. God did not save us because we are holy, He saved us to make us holy. That is why we are called into a life of fellowship with the Lord. We are being made holy by a divine work called sanctification. Day by day through fellowship with our Lord we are, as the Apostle Peter expressed it, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The more we have fellowship with the Lord, the more we are becoming like the Lord. Spiritual growth takes time, and God is working in all of us. Some

day when we see the Lord, that work of sanctification will be complete, and that will be when we finally see the Lord. God is working in all of us, and He never gives up on any of us who truly know the Lord. That is what Philippians 1:6 tells us, "Being confident of this very thing . . ." For now we are to "desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby" (2 Peter 3:18). That is why we read the Word. That is why we by God's grace obey the Word. And through daily fellowship with the Lord in prayer and in our fellowship with each other, God is making us more and more like Christ. And our fellowship with Him becomes sweeter and more and more of a blessing to us. This is where we find the joy that we so much desire. But, and here is the warning that we are given in verse 6 of 1 John 1. There is a big danger that our talk is not backed up by our walk.

What did the Apostle John mean by the word, walk? This is the way that the Bible describes *the way we live*. The way we know, and the way others know, that we are enjoying true fellowship with the Lord, is not just by the way we talk, but it is by the way we live. Our talk is important IF it is backed up by our walk, by the way we live. So if I claim to be a Christian because I go to church, or because I have joined a church, or because I give to the church, but do not show evidence that I am walking in daily fellowship with God, the Apostle John stated it very strong, I am a liar because I "do not the truth." Doing the truth is obeying the truth. And the truth that the Apostle John was talking about was the truth of the Word of God. Our Lord prayed in John 17:17, praying for those whom the Father had given to Him, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." To be sanctified is to be made holy.

So the Apostle John said very plainly that "if we say that we have fellowship with Him," with God, and with the Lord, but walk in darkness (which the Lord never did and never will), the only conclusion we ought to be able to come to is that we are lying if we claim that we are saved. I have known of some preachers who would fail this test.

But this is not where we need to be thinking, not of others, but of ourselves! Do I love the Bible? Does it describe the way I seek to live? Or, do I show some interest in the Bible, but I am not patterning my life after what it says to do, or not do?

What is sin? See 1 John 3:4. What is a transgression? It is a violation of Scripture. Sin is any and everything that is displeasing to God. Sin is the

greatest problem that we face in our fellowship with God. Sin is both positive and negative. That is, there are sins of commission, and sins of omission. We can sin by what we do, and we can also sin by what we do not do. We are inclined to think that we only sin by what we do, but often at death the godliest of believers are especially concerned about what they have not done – those times when they have not spoken of Christ when they had the opportunity, or good that they did not do when they had the opportunity to do it.

The Word, from Genesis to Revelation, is our greatest safeguard against Sin. The writer of Psalm 119, probably King David, wrote in Psalm 119:11, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” This was the Psalmist personal and private relationship with the Word. People who sin habitually usually do it in secret to try to hide it from other people, but the child of God, in his walk with the Lord, stores up the Word of God in his heart, because he has found this to be the greatest preventive against sin. The more time we give to the Word, the greater will be our fellowship with the Lord. This is why we have our quiet times with the Lord. On the one hand they bring us joy in the Lord. On the other, they are a safeguard against sin. The person who neglects the Word of God will soon grow lax in his attitude toward sin.

Concl: We all need to examine our own lives, our daily habits, the place that we give to the Word of God, and prayer. We are not strengthening ourselves by ourselves, but strengthening ourselves through the ministry of the Word of God to us.