

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST

TEXT: I JOHN 1:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

1. Neither the author nor the addressees are named in the letter. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "unbroken tradition affirms," and "internal evidence and comparison with the Gospel of John" proves the Apostle John is the author (Introduction).
2. It is obvious that the author knew our Lord well and had spent time with Him (1:1-4). Also, the vocabulary and expression coincide with the Gospel of John, II John, and III John.
3. It was probably written after AD 90 (cf. Scofield).
4. **BACKGROUND:** At the time John was writing this epistle, a false cult had arisen which became known as "Gnosticism." The word "gnostic" comes from the Greek word *gnōsis* meaning, "knowledge and understanding."
5. These Gnostics made a distinction between Jesus and "the Christ." To them "the Christ" was a divine emanation which came upon Jesus at His baptism and left before His death.
6. According to this strange teaching (which forms the basis of Christian Science, theosophy, the Unity cult, and many of the new-age cults today), Jesus did die, but "the Christ" did not die. They denied His incarnation and that Jesus is both man and God (cf. I John 1:1; John 1:1).
7. John warned his readers that the Gnostics were not true Christians (though they claimed to be), and pointed out that they did not have the marks of true children of God (cf. 1:6, 8, 10, 2:4, 9, 11, 15, 19, 22; 3:6, 8-10, etc.).
8. The Gnostics professed to "know" the truth but they really did not. Therefore, John uses the word "know" 38 times (cf. 5:13).
9. Tonight, we will look into chapter 1, which deals with fellowship with God (cf. 1:3).

I. PARTICIPATION IN THE FELLOWSHIP (1:1-4)

1. The Gnostics taught that Jesus was nothing but a phantasm, some sort of spook, so John begins by refuting this (1:1-3).
2. These opening verses affirm the eternality and the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He not only gives eternal life, but He *is* eternal life (1:2; cf. 5:20).

3. The first of the purposes stated by John for writing this epistle is so that the reader might enjoy true Christian fellowship (1:3). The word "fellowship" appears four times in chapter 1 and it is one of the key words in the letter (1:3, 6, 7).
4. Our English word "fellowship" as it is used today, usually means "friendly social intercourse." This is not exactly what John had in mind. The word as used here conveys the meaning of "partnership" (cf. Phil. 1:3-5).
5. The same word is translated "partakers" in II Peter 1:4 -- "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
6. This kind of fellowship with God brings joy to the life of the believer (1:4). The world can never experience this joy, and the world can never provide this joy – true joy, lasting joy can only come through knowing Jesus Christ.
7. Notice John says, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1:4; cf. John 15:11). "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (Evidence that John wrote the epistle.)
8. True Christianity is a religion of joy because it is one of fellowship with Christ. Have you ever noticed the gloom and sadness attached to all the other religions? Even their music is often spooky and melancholy.
9. One Christian defined joy as "the flag which is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there."
10. When you have the joy of the Lord even your countenance changes. Many years ago the great missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, was home on furlough and passed through the city of Stonington, Connecticut. A young boy playing down at the wharf at the time of Judson's arrival was struck by his appearance. Never before had he seen such a light on any human face.
11. Many years later that boy became the well-known preacher, Henry Clay Trumbull. In his autobiography, he wrote a chapter entitled, "What a Boy Saw in the Face of Adoniram Judson," explaining how Judson's shining countenance changed his life.
12. They say it takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile!

II. THE CONDITIONS OF FELLOWSHIP (1:5-7)

1. As I stated earlier, fellowship means partnership. John now gives instructions for true fellowship with God – these are the conditions: "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5).
2. In other words, God is absolutely holy. God cannot look with favor upon any form of sin. Habakkuk 1:13 says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..." (cf. I Tim. 6:15, 16).
3. Therefore, to have fellowship with God we cannot walk in darkness (1:6).
4. On the other hand, if we walk in the light, than we can have fellowship with God and with one another (1:7).
5. This is all based upon Christ's shed blood (1:7). There was a "parliament of religions" at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, and one by one each major world religion had their representative speak on how wonderful his religion was, how it benefited mankind, and so forth.
6. There were about four thousand in attendance, with 150 papers and addresses, each one from one half to one hour in length, besides many shorter off-hand speeches.
7. Colorfully-robed leaders from India, Japan, China, Africa, Europe, and all over the world, representing Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Judaism, and other religions all stood up to speak and promote their religion.
8. Finally, it was time for the Christian to speak, a pastor from Boston by the name of Joseph Cook. He vividly described the blood on Lady Macbeth's hands, how she tried scrubbing and scrubbing and it wouldn't come off. He looked around the huge auditorium, he looked at each speaker who had already spoken, and he asked: "Is there any one here tonight who can help her? What can remove this blood? Lady Macbeth is beside herself with guilt, the victim's blood is on her hands, and she can't wash it off. I turn to Mohammedanism. Can you wash our red, right hands? I turn to Confucianism and Buddhism and Brahmanism. Can you? Can anyone here help her?"
9. After considerable silence, Pastor Cook quoted I John 1:7 -- "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
10. John says one of the conditions of fellowship with God is that we cannot walk in darkness (1:6; cf. John 3:19-21).
11. Darkness in the Bible represents sin – spiritual darkness is idolatry, unbelief, false religion, and doctrinal error. Moral darkness is sexual immorality, lying, stealing, drinking, drugs, and so forth.

12. According to the Bible, most people are in darkness. Fellowship with God and walking in darkness are mutually exclusive experiences.
13. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:16; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
14. Our Lord said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
15. Ephesians 5:8 says, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."
16. Colossians 1:13 says, God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
17. First Peter 2:9 says God hath called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light."
18. Genesis 1:4 says, "God divided the light from the darkness." Darkness and light cannot exist together at the same time. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"
19. We need to get the Gospel light out to those in darkness – then they will get under conviction of sin and get saved. J. Vernon McGee gives a good illustration of this. He was out hunting when it started pouring so he ducked into a cave. It was pitch black in the cave but that didn't bother him at all. But after about a half an hour he felt cold so he gathered together some leaves that were on the floor and started a fire. Then he noticed that there were lizards, snakes, and all sorts of unfriendly creatures crawling all over the place – so he ran out of there. The point is that he was quite comfortable in the cave until there was light – then his eyes were opened to the reality of the situation. Likewise, multitudes of people are comfortable in darkness because they never hear the Word of God but once they do, the Holy Spirit brings them under conviction.

III. THE PROVISIONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP (1:8 – 10)

1. Fellowship with God requires that we acknowledge the truth about ourselves. To deny that we are sinners means self-deception (1:8).
2. This has always been a big problem – it was a problem with the self-righteous Pharisees, it was a problem with the deluded Gnostics, and it is a problem today with many religious people today.

3. I remember trying to help a young man whose family was in the JW cult and his father was very angry with me during a phone conversation. I calmly told him, "Mr. Reyes, you can get saved if you trust in Jesus Christ" and he got more agitated – "Do you know who you are talking to?" he roared. "I am a Jehovah Witness!" he yelled.
4. AA people are nearly as bad.
5. When people recognize sin for what it really is, then they can begin to respect God for who He really is. When people fail to see sin for what it is, they also fail to recognize the holiness of God.
6. Conversion does not mean the eradication of the sin nature. Rather, it means the implanting of the new, divine nature, with power to live victoriously over indwelling sin (1:7-9).
7. H. A. Ironside tells a humorous story concerning the preacher Henry Varley. Varley was holding meetings in Oakland, California and was preaching on this passage and said: "I have been told that you have a good many sinless people out here in California. I have never seen one such person myself, and I have a real curiosity to see one; if there is one here tonight, I should like to see him as soon as the meeting is over." After the meeting, a man came up to the preacher and said, "I understand you want to meet a perfectly sinless man. Well, I haven't sinned in 22 years, since I was wholly sanctified." "Well. Now, my dear brother," said Mr. Varley, "let me get this right. You realize, of course, that there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission?" The man said that, yes, he realized that, and no, he hadn't committed any sins of either omission or commission in 22 years and so on, when all of a sudden an old lady came walking down the aisle and said: "Yes, there are some folks who say that they never commit sins, but try talking to their neighbors! I live next door to this man and listen to what I have to say..." At this the man disappeared into the crowd!
8. Fellowship with God involves keeping short accounts with God. It means confessing our sins and forsaking them (1:9).
9. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

CONCLUSION:

1. There was false teacher (Bob George) on the radio who denied this doctrine. He said you confess your sins when you receive Christ, and no more after that. He claimed 1 John 1:9 was not written to Christians but the lost.

2. Later that man was caught with a prostitute, pleaded no-contest to soliciting a prostitute.
3. The Gnostics were guilty of antinomianism ("no law"). They thought of the body as a sort of envelope covering the spirit which could not be contaminated or defiled by the deeds of the body. Some even boasted that they were very spiritual and had progressed beyond the possibility of defilement. But the Bible teaches that sin is always a barrier to fellowship with God and that religion without morality is an abomination. Yet multitudes are being deceived by these satanic delusions.