

I John 1

In A. D. 70, the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Christians living there fled to other areas through out the Roman Empire. The apostle John, the author of this letter, fled to the city of Ephesus where he became the senior elder of that church. A group of false teachers had crept into the churches in Asia Minor and were teaching a doctrine called Gnosticism. The basic principle of this doctrine was that because God is perfectly Holy and all flesh is sinful therefore it was impossible for Him to have come to earth as the God-man, Jesus Christ like the apostles were teaching. They were also teaching the people that the true way to salvation was through gaining elite knowledge and being able to understand certain formulas which were only revealed to the intellectually elite. This Gnostic doctrine had a disruptive effect in the churches. Those who were considered "enlightened" thought of themselves as being spiritually superior to all who did not have this divine knowledge. This caused divisions between the intellectually elite and the common people. The Gnostics also believed since they had received divine knowledge, they were truly informed as to their divine nature, so it didn't matter how they lived.

Many of the people of churches in the area were being affected by this doctrine and were turning away from the faith. So John, the only apostle still living at that time, wrote this letter from Ephesus in around 90 A. D. to the churches in Asia Minor. The main purpose of the letter is to refute the Gnostic doctrine, prove that Jesus was indeed the Christ and to refocus them back to Him as the foundation of their faith. The basic outline of this letter is:

God is Light 1:1 - 2:29 **God is Love** 3 :1 - 4:21 **God is Life** 5:1 - 5:21

Vs 1 Jesus the Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life

Since John was writing about Jesus it seems odd that he would begin his letter with the phrase "***That which was from the beginning***", rather than *He who was from the beginning*.

But he uses it because he is talking about the sum total of all the experiences the apostles had with Jesus during His earthly ministry. Why does John call Jesus the Word of Life? A word is the expression of an idea, a thought or a thing. Jesus was the physical expression of God to humanity. This principle is clearly supported by:

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation:

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he Had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

This is also the idea Jesus was expressing in John 14 when Phillip asked him in vs 8 ***Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.*** And Jesus replied vs 9 ***Have I been with you so long time, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you then, Show us the Father?*** When John referred to Jesus as "***The Word of life***"; the point he's emphasizing is: We are all born physically alive but spiritually dead. Jesus, the express image of God Himself, is the only way we can be made alive spiritually. God came into the world as a man, John and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of all He did. He told his readers ***we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,*** to make it clear that not only had they heard and seen Jesus, but they had actually touched Him. The Gnostics taught that Jesus may have appeared to be a man-- but in reality-- He was only a spirit and never was human flesh. John's point is; if Jesus could be touched, He had to have been a physical being because you can't touch a spirit.

Vs 2 Why God Became A Man

2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us

The doctrine of the **Incarnation** (that *doctrine which teaches that God Himself took on Human flesh and came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ*) is essential to salvation.

The term ***eternal life*** refers to everlasting spiritual life from God and with God. Jesus came to earth as a man to ***manifest*** (or *make known*) to man the only way to obtain eternal life.

As Jesus declared in ***John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except through me.*** John's point is, yes Jesus was truly a man but He was far more than that. He is the eternal Word who existed with the Father ***from the beginning***. He was 100% eternal God and 100% man all in one. John was commissioned to testify to the world that Jesus, whom he personally experienced, is eternal life and only those who trust in Him can possess it.

Vs 3 Fellowship With God

3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The key to understanding this verse is the word *fellowship*. Fellowship basically means people who have something in common sharing in their commonness. What saved people have in common with God is a relationship. He is our Father and we as His beloved children. Children inherit the characteristics of their parents. And since God is our Father our fellowship with Him should reproduce in us some of the same qualities our Father possesses. This Fellowship comes as a result of Him raising our status through the death and resurrection of Christ.

When the disciples were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they were brought into spiritual fellowship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They were commissioned by God to share what they had seen and heard to encourage as many others as possible to also enter into fellowship with them. Whoever chooses to join this fellowship with the apostles also joins in a fellowship with God the Father and God the Son.

Christian fellowship is based on 4 basic principles.

1. Christian fellowship is grounded in the testimony of God's Word. Without this foundation togetherness would be impossible
2. Christian fellowship is mutual: that is, it is dependent on believers being unified.
One Lord, one faith, one baptism and all things being done for God's glory.
3. Christian fellowship is renewed daily through the Holy Spirit. Peaceful and loving social and spiritual interactions are made possible only by drawing from the power of Christ that flows to us through the Holy Spirit.
4. Christian fellowship demands association with truth. Once we get saved our relationship with God is permanently sealed but we are held in our fellowship with Him by applying His divine truths to our daily living.

Vs 4 Joy is A Product of Our Fellowship.

4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

Joy is that internal gladness, contentment, and cheerfulness the people of God should continually experience because it is a spiritual fruit the Holy Spirit produces down in our souls.

This joy is very different from mere happiness. Happiness is a feeling that's totally dependent on the circumstances of life. When life's circumstances are favorable, we are usually happy but when things go sour we get sour. But Christian joy rises above all present circumstances because it focuses on the very character and sovereign will of our God whom we know works all things together for the good of His children. God's joy is *full*, even in the midst of storms and sorrow. John's point is: I've experienced the fullness of God's great joy and I've writing to you so that *your joy may be full*. But joy is produced through our fellowship with God. Our relationship with God is permanent and there's nothing anybody can do, not even anything we can do ourselves, can ever change that. But our fellowship with God is conditional. When we sin our fellowship with Him is broken. So when a Child of God is not experiencing the Joy of the Lord, it's fellowship problem. Some un-confessed sin is blocking the fellowship.

Vss 5-6 God is Light And His Children Share That Quality.

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Light is a symbol for God's truths as revealed through the scriptures and all that is good, pure, true, holy and reliable. Darkness is a symbol of the works of Satan, spiritual ignorance or scriptural error. When John says *God is light*, He means that God is perfectly holy and His revealed truth is the light that can guide men out of the darkness of their sins.

Remember the Gnostics were teaching that the true way to salvation was elite knowledge that was found in secret formulas that God only revealed to the intellectually privileged. When John says *God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all*: he means because God is the revealer of truth and not in any way a concealer. God is light and in Him there are no truths hidden in the shadows or kept in secret for a select few. Those who claim to have fellowship with God based on some secret knowledge are liars who live in spiritual ignorance (*walk in darkness*). In the dark, both evil and good may look alike but when you shine the light on them-- you can readily see the difference.

Vss 8 & 10 We Are Still Sinners

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

The word sin in these verses is not talking about individual acts of sin, but rather the basic sin nature we all inherit from Adam that causes us to sin. The Gnostics also taught that their sin nature had been completely eliminated so they were capable of living sinless lives. They based this doctrine on a belief that the body and the spirit have a totally separate existence so if a person happened to sin with his body-- in God's eyes-- they would still be considered sin-less because those sinful acts did not affect their spirits. But those who taught this belief went far beyond lying or fooling themselves, they were guilty of blasphemy for calling God a liar, because He says in:

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Before salvation can occur, we must confess that we are sinners who are incapable of saving ourselves, beg for God's forgiveness, then accept Jesus' death as the payment for our past, present and future sins. But anyone who denies his sins can never truly be saved nor has he ever had God's truth in his heart.

Vss 7 & 9 God's Provision For Our Occasional Sins.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

God knew we would never be able to completely eliminate sin from our lives as long as we live in our sinful flesh and that our sins break our fellowship with Him. So He provided a remedy for us to restore broken fellowship.

If we will confess our sins: (Which means to agree with Him that we know our sinful words, thoughts or deeds are wrong and that we desire not to commit those sins again). When we do that, He forgives us of those sins and the same blood of Jesus that originally saved us-- continually works ***to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*** and restores our fellowship with Him.

But as long as there is any un-forgiven sin in our lives our fellowship stays broken and we even feel disconnected. No prayers can go up, no blessing can come down, no Holy Spirit produced power can flow out.