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Fellowship With God - Part 1 1 John 1:5-2:2

What we are attempting to do in this 10:45 class that we call steadfast is to think through practical areas of the Christian life. In addition to the exposition of the Word from Kirk, we want to put issues we all face in the Christian life under the crosshairs of Scripture to make sure we understand them the right way. Assurance of salvation is what we are considering together for the next few months.

Assurance of salvation - Big deal or not that big of a deal? I think it's a big deal. This quote should be in the top of your notes. **Thomas Brooks writes, "The being in a state of grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter, but the seeing of himself in this estate will yield him both a heaven here and a heaven hereafter; it will render him doubly blest, blest in heaven, and blest in his own conscience."** That was written close to 350 years ago by a pastor who knew the joy that comes from a right understanding of assurance.

1 John was written to help us in this area. It was written to a group of believers who had come to faith in Christ and then had gone through a hard season encountering false teachers. These people were probably living in and around Ephesus at the time. Ephesus was a dark place spiritually. Remember the gospel initially came to this city through the apostle Paul. We read about that in Acts 18-20. Paul was there for 3 years preaching the gospel and building up believers in their faith. He told the elders of the church in his last meeting that after he left, this is Acts 20:29-30, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. "

What Paul said would happen had happened. **John is writing to a group of Christians whose faith had been shaken by false teachers but their faith was still intact.** That was not true for some of the people they knew. These John is writing to knew people who bought the lies of these false teachers who denied the deity of Christ and led people away from Christ into sin. John writes about them in 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if

they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

It might help to picture a city before and after a tornado. Before the tornado the homes all look fine and then the tornado comes through the town and the homes are still standing but they are beat up a little bit. The roof is damaged. The windows may be broken. But the foundation is still there and what the home needs is to be put back together. John is writing to a group of believers whose faith was still intact after the storm of false teachers had come and gone. It also appears that though the major tornado has passed, there are still unbelievers around these people trying to deceive them.

1 John is about assurance of salvation. Why should we listen to John on this topic? He was the right man for the job. John was an apostle. **He spent time with Christ before the cross and after the cross and he writes with the help of the Holy Spirit.** He clearly loves these people. He refers to them affectionally throughout the letter as my little children. John is an older man at this time, probably in his 80' or 90's and he is still as passionate as ever about people knowing and growing in Christ. He's a reliable shepherd who can help all of us make sure we know we are saved this side of glory.

The text for this morning and April 10 when we return is 1 John 1:5-2:2. But I want us to begin with the beginning of the letter and read from 1 John 1:1-2:2 so you see the connection between these two sections of Scripture:

1 John 1:1-2:2

- 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—
- 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—
- 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
- 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.
- 5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
- 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

- 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 his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
- 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
- 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

There is a difference in verses 1-4 and verses 5-2:2. What's the difference? 1 John 1:1-4 is a message John proclaimed **about** Christ. 1 John 1:1-4 reminds us who Christ is and why Christ came. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man who came to restore fellowship with God. Our sin broke fellowship with a holy God and Jesus came to die and rise again to restore that fellowship. Fellowship means partnership.

Union and communion is what believers have with the Triune God because of their faith in the Person and work of Christ.

Then in 1 John 1:5 down through 2:2, John provides us with a description of who has fellowship with God and who does not have fellowship with God. He describes the difference between a possessor of eternal life and someone who professes to have fellowship with God when they really don't. What's the point? **God loves us too much to leave us in the dark about who has fellowship with Him and who says they do, but they really don't. God does not want anyone in this room to be confused over their spiritual condition.**

That's how you know a good pastor. A good pastor takes eternal life serious and wants to make sure the people he serves understand who is saved and who is lost. John reminds us that there is a big difference between someone who is exposed to Christ in a saving way and someone who is not really united to Christ.

Something that I love doing in my free time is watching hunting shows on television. I love watching men get up early in the morning and trek out into the wilderness with a bow and arrow and call in an elk and then end its life and cook

it up for dinner. If that offends you, I'm sorry. Kind of. While the rest of the Gillen girls are upstairs watching Hallmark or some other show, I am usually downstairs watching hunting shows.

Though I watch a lot of hunting, I would not call myself a hunter. I did grow up in Texas. I grew up around hunters. I did kill a deer growing up. I actually had a picture of me as a youngster on a four wheeler with a rope tied to the deer I killed pulling the skin off the deer while my extended family cheered me on. I'm just sayin. I like watching hunting shows and I have killed a deer before, but I would not consider myself an actual hunter.

This became apparent a few years ago when I was living in Kansas. Some friends from Texas were coming up to where I lived to go pheasant hunting and they asked me to come along. We got to the field where we would be hunting. We were standing around getting ready to walk the fields and shoot some pheasants. While we were getting ready a friend threw me something and told me to put it around my neck. I didn't know what it was so I obeyed his orders. I started trying to wrap this thing around my neck and all the guys start dying laughing. I didn't know it, but the guy had thrown me the shock collar for his hunting dog. That's how little I knew about hunting, that I was trying to put this shock collar on.

What's the point? Though I watch a lot of hunting and I have been hunting a few times, I don't claim to be a hunter. That's not true when it comes to a lot of people in the world in which we live. There are lots of people today who claim to be Christians. They claim to have a saving relationship with God. But what does that actually mean? **Is it possible for someone to profess to be a Christian and not really be one? Yes. What is true in our day was true in John's day.** These people needed help thinking through who has fellowship with God and what that fellowship looks like on a daily basis.

In 1 John 1:5-2:2 John is helping us think through the difference between someone who possesses eternal life and someone who professes eternal life when they really don't have it.

This morning I want you to see three distinguishing characteristics of someone who possesses eternal life (That life being genuine faith in Christ):

1. Someone who possesses eternal life is changed by the light of Christ - 1 John 1:5

In the gospel of John and in his letters, John presents several "God is" statements. 1 John 1:5 is one of those statements:

1 John 1:5

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

In this verse John is thinking back to what he learned from Christ and what He saw in Christ. What's the message? God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. This is a statement about the nature of God. It describes who God is and who God is not. God is light speaks of His transcendence and His moral purity. The last part literally reads not no darkness in Him. Light is a reference to moral purity and darkness is a reference to sin. God is holy and there is no sin in Him at all.

I think this is a verse about who God is, but it's more than that. John not only knows who God is, He also knows that anyone who is exposed to the light of Christ in a saving way was transformed. I think John is thinking back to what he remembered and wrote about in John 8. I want you to turn back to John 8 for a minute. In John 8, Jesus is dealing with a different group of false teachers, but there are parallels between 1 John 1 and John 8 because the point is the same - **Those who are exposed to God's light ultimately revealed in Christ are transformed. They don't stay the same.**

I think it's a good idea if you want to do a deeper study of 1 John to keep the gospel close at hand because the letter builds off the gospel. Look with me over at John 8:12. Remember there are several I Am statements from Christ in the gospel of John. These are statements describing His deity - who Christ is. Look what Jesus tells the Pharisees about who He is and what it means to be His disciple. I want to read quite a few verses here so we get this because this will help us think through the next section in 1 John.

John 8:12-38

- 12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- 13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

- 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.
- 15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.
- 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.
- 17 In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true.
- 18 I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."
- 19 They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."
- 20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.
- 21 So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come."
- 22 So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"
- 23 He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.
- 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."
- 25 So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.
- 26 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."
- 27 They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.
- 28 So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.
- 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."
- 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.
- 31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
- 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

- 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
- 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.
- 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.
- 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Do you pick up on the problem Jesus is addressing in this section? The Pharisees thought they knew God and they didn't. Remember the people in Jesus' day looked up to the Pharisees. They assumed if anyone was saved that it was these fellas. The Pharisees fancied themselves, fancied is a British term, as the experts in the law of Moses. If anyone had a relationship with God, people assumed it was these folks. Jesus seems to take a different perspective in John 8.

What does Jesus tell these guys? He tells them who He is and who has fellowship with God. **He tells them that He is the light of the world.** That's a statement about who Jesus is. *God's light has shone in and through the person of Christ.* Hebrews 1:3 refers to Christ as "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." **God is light and that light was on display when Christ came.**

Christ not only claims to be the light of the world, *He also shows the difference it makes in people who receive Him the right way.* What do people who receive Christ do differently than people who reject Christ? People who receive Christ follow Him and they do not walk in darkness - that's verse 12. People who receive Christ, look at verse 31, abide in His Word. People who receive Christ, verse 36 are set free from their sin.

What's the point? **Who Christ is changes who we are.** When we become alive to the gospel of Christ everything changes. Amen? It is impossible to be brought into a saving relationship with Christ who is the light of the world and stay the same. Jesus makes that clear to the Pharisees in John 8 and John makes that clear to the believers he is writing to in 1 John 1:5. 1 John 1:5, you can go back there now, is a statement about the nature of God - Who He is. But in the context it is more than just a statement. John is reminding us that everyone who is exposed to the light of Christ is transformed.

Think back for a minute as you are turning back to 1 John 1:5 to the time when God's light shone on your sin sick soul. The light came in. God shone the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ into your sin darkened heart. What happened? He saved you and He began to change you. The new birth changes our affections. Now we love the Lord and want to walk with Him and to please Him in all we do.

Exposure to the light of the gospel always has a transforming effect on people who receive it the right way.

Someone who possesses eternal life embraces the truth about Christ. That truth transforms who we are and how we live. John takes what he knows about the nature of God and what he knows about people who possess eternal life and he presents some hypothetical situations in verses 6-10. He lays the foundation in verse 5 and then builds on it in verses 6-10.

I want to read all of these verses so you get the flow of John's thought.

1 John 1:6-10

- 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
- 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 his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

In this section John shows us who has fellowship with the God who is light and who doesn't. Please notice these conditional statements. There are four if statements in these 5 verses. **We is a description of people who claim to have fellowship with the God.** John's goal in this section is not to beat down true Christians. His goal is to build them up. In verses 6, 8, and 10 John exposes counterfeit Christians. In verses 7 and 9 he encourages those who have truly been converted.

This is the second point I want you to consider with me this morning about someone who possesses eternal life and has fellowship with God:

2. Someone who possesses eternal life lives differently both directionally and confessionally - 1 John 1:6-10

To understand these verses we have to understand what John means by light and darkness.

Curtis Vaughan, "If light primarily denotes purity, then living in darkness speaks of living an impure life. On the other hand, if light denotes God's self-revelation, then walking in darkness signifies disregard for or defiance of what He has revealed of Himself. That is to say, one who walks in darkness lives his life without reference to the revealed will of God. Either way, to walk in darkness is to live a life of sin."

What does John write about a person who claims to have fellowship with God in verse 6 while walking in darkness? He says they lie. That's pretty clear, isn't it? To walk in darkness is to live a life of sin. It describes someone who lives a life of disregard or even defiance to the revealed will of God. They do not practice the truth. That's a counterfeit Christian.

Someone who is truly converted lives differently. Someone who possesses eternal life walks in the light. Walks describes their normal everyday life. What do converted people do? They walk with the Lord in the light of His Word. They want to do this. What are the ongoing benefits of such a lifestyle? Communion with Christ. Notice what else we have at the end of verse 7, "we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

Our fellowship with God changes our desire for His people. **Rick Kress, "Believers have fellowship with other children of God, which is ultimately related to fellowship with God. They are free to enjoy the rich rewards and intimacy of those who are sons of the king. They are free to live out eternal life and fellowship to its fullest. If you're walking in the light, you will not forsake the assembling together, as is the habit of some. But you will congregate and consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). The fellowship of other Christians will be sweet."**

That's one benefit. The blessings of community. What else? At the end of verse 7 we also see that as we trust in Christ and walk in His Word on a daily basis "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." This is a reminder that the

cross has continuing effects on our daily lives. John is thinking of the ongoing effect of the work of Christ in our daily pursuit of holiness.

Rick Kress, "The significance of the death of the Son of God is continual cleansing from every kind of sin. This cleansing is for all who walk in the light, because they are children of the light, through simple faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. **1 John 1:7 presents an ongoing, present cleansing for true Christians. The truth is freedom to pursue righteousness indeed.**"

Possessing eternal life, union with Christ, changes our lives directionally. It also changes our lives confessionally. What's another big difference between a cleansed Christian and a counterfeit Christian? **Counterfeit Christians deny the reality of their sin and cleansed Christians continually confess their sin.**

1 John 1:8-10

- 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

It's hard to understand these verses without understanding the context. What John is writing to the original audience. How could anyone in their right mind come to the conclusion that they have no sin and even further than that, that they are beyond the reach of sin. This is what the false teachers in John's day believed because of their Gnostic tendencies. Oh boy, Blake's been teaching for close to 40 minutes and now he wants us to think about Gnostic tendencies. I need that one week break.

Remember these believers had come through a satanic attack. False teachers came to these people denying the truth about Christ. They held to some form of dualism that said that the spirit world was good but the created world or matter was evil. **Curtis Vaughan, "Starting with the assumption that the body is evil, some gnostics turned to asceticism and others to the opposite extreme of licentiousness. It appears that licentiousness was the tendency of those whom John opposes in this epistle. The body, they argued, is evil and doomed to sin, but the spirit is independent of the body, and therefore remains undefiled regardless of what one does. By this reasoning they set themselves above the obligations of morality and insisted that for them nothing was sin."**

John makes it clear that people who know the Lord don't think this way. We understand that when we are born again we receive a new nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 rings true, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." What kind of creation are we in Christ? A new creation. Once united to Adam in his sin, we are now united to Christ in His righteousness.

What happens to sin when we are saved? The penalty is paid and the power of broken but the presence remains. Paul says it this way at the end of Romans 7:24-25, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin." In another place, Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."

True Christians who walk in the light don't deny their sin. They confess it. When the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to teach us and to reprove us we don't do nothing. We do something. We confess our sins to God. We own it. We don't deny it like people who don't know Christ. To confess means to say the same thing that Scripture says about our sin. When we do that, what does God do for us?

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is not a salvation verse. This is a sanctification verse. This is describing what our walk with the Lord looks like on a daily basis. On a daily basis the light of Scripture both directs us and confronts us with ongoing sin. If we know our sins are removed by Christ at the cross and the blood of Jesus continually cleanses our sin, we confess it.

Sin does not break our union with Christ, but it does sever our intimacy with Him.

How do you know you're born again? You are a sin confessor. This is our daily life, right? We believe in Christ. We trust in Him for our salvation. We believe He loves us and we love Him. Our love for the Lord leads to a desire to obey Him. When we don't obey Him it bothers us. It grieves God the Holy Spirit. So, we keep short accounts with the Lord. We know that we cannot walk intimately with the Lord and in sin at the same time.

When we confess our sins what does God do? Look at the end of verse 9, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Faithful means that God is true to His word. Just means that the price for sin has been paid in full by Christ. The promise of confession is forgiveness and cleansing.

Warren Wiersbe tells the story about a woman who was concerned for her spiritual condition. She told a visiting pastor, "I would like to become a Christian, but I'm afraid I can't hold out. I'm sure to sin again!"

Turning to 1 John 1, the pastor said, "No doubt you *will* sin again, because God says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 John 1:8). But if you *do* sin, God will forgive you if you will confess your sin to Him. But it isn't *necessary* for Christians to sin. As we walk in fellowship with God and in obedience to His Word, He gives us ability to resist and to have victory over temptation."

Then the pastor remembered that the woman had gone through surgery some months before. "When you had your surgery," he asked, "was there a possibility of complications or problems afterward?" "Oh, yes," she replied, "But whenever I had a problem, I went to see the doctor and he took care of it." Then the truth hit her! "I see it!" she exclaimed. "Christ is always available to keep me out of sin or to forgive my sin!"

I believe in this section of Scripture, all of 1 John 1 is meant to encourage and build up beleaguered Christians. How does John encourage them? By taking them back to what they knew about Christ. The Christ who manifests the character of God is the One who brings us into fellowship with God, That fellowship, union and communion, changes how we live. To be alive to the gospel leads to a changed life both directionally and confessionally. We don't walk in darkness anymore. We walk in the light. As we walk in the light amazing things are true of us - We have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses us from every sin. When we sin we don't deny it. We confess it. God cleanses us and the fellowship is restored. The intimacy returns.

In an article I read this week on assurance an author named Paul Twiss wrote about the importance of something called the Heidelberg catechism. It was written by a group of pastors in 1563. The first question and answer are extremely helpful, "In 1563 a group of men from Heidelberg University wrote what is known today as the Heidelberg Catechism. Often overlooked in favor of the

Westminster Catechism, the Heidelberg is generally more pastoral in tone. The very first question reads, "what is my only comfort in life and in death?" The answer: That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."

You can put verses to that answer. May that answer to that all important question be true for all of us. You're loved. Let's pray.