

DIY Sermon Notes

Fellowship with the Eternal

1 John 1:1–4

January 14, 2007

A. **The Text:** <sup>1</sup>The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>This one who is life from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was shown to us. <sup>3</sup>We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that our joy will be complete. – 1 John 1:1-4  
New Living Translation paraphrase

B. What is Fellowship?

1. the popular understanding

2. the meaning of the Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*

a. to share ...

b. to share ...

c. which is in the forefront here?

C. Its Basis is True

D. It Involves God and Man

E. Its Result is Joy

A. The Text

1. 1 That which was from inception (or, the beginning), that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we looked upon {intently} and our hands touched {to examine}, respecting the word of life — 2 and this life was made manifest and we beheld and we bear witness and we announce to you the eternal life, which was in the presence of the Father and was made manifest to us — 3 what we beheld and what we heard, this also we proclaim to you in order that you may have fellowship with us. Even that fellowship of ours which is in fact with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. 4 These things we are writing in order that our joy may be completed. (RGH)
2. last Sunday afternoon, in a bit of a coincidence
  - a. I happened to tune to a program – ‘Knowing the Way’, I think it was called – in which the preacher was speaking on the same text as we looked at last week ... the first two verses of this letter of John
  - b. perhaps you heard this too which is both bad and good
    - (A) bad, because you would see how a real preacher can compel your attention to a Bible passage!
    - (B) good, because he really conveyed in graphic terms the message that John is seeking to get across
  - c. let me see if I can, although not having the eloquence of that preacher, share with you his message
  - d. It is the beginning of things that set the course for their future development and result
    - (A) if you begin something upon a shaky foundation then the result will be shaky
    - (B) if you begin something upon falsehood, the result will be false; if upon truth, then true
  - e. “now,” says John, “these teachers are telling you all sorts of things, they are saying what I told you is wrong”
  - f. “but, listen,” says John, “I was there at the beginning
    - (A) I saw what was happening with my own two eyes
    - (B) I heard what Jesus said with my own two ears
    - (C) I was thrown together with Jesus day after day
    - (D) I knew the Word, and I heard His words
    - (E) I know what I am talking about
    - (F) you had better listen to me
    - (G) for what I am telling you is the gospel truth!”

3. So what is this gospel truth? ... simply this
  - a. if we have truly accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - b. then our lives must be radically changed;
  - c. the mark of the person who has saving faith
  - d. is that they should "Live in the Light"
  - e. this command is the theme of first John
  - f. "Live in the Light"
  - g. and, if you are going to "Live in the Light"
  - h. this demands that you live in fellowship with the Eternal – that is, with the One who is Eternal
  - i. that is the message of these first four verses of first John that we are considering today: Fellowship with the Eternal

4. so let us look at these verses with the following outline:
  - a. What is Fellowship?
  - b. Its Basis is True
  - c. It Involves God and Man
  - d. Its Result is Joy

## B. What is Fellowship?

1. there are words in the Bible
  - a. whose meanings for us are determined
    - (A) not so much by the derivation of the word itself
    - (B) but by our culture, upbringing, church background
  - b. one example is the word 'baptism'
    - (A) which literally means 'dipped' or 'immersed'
    - (B) and, I am told, only missed out being translated that way in the King James version by a narrow margin
    - (C) but means different things to different people
    - (D) because of their familiarity with one symbolic act

- c. this word, 'fellowship,' is another such word
2. for many Christians, even many mature believers
  - a. fellowship is simply
    - (A) having a good time together with other believers
    - (B) a social occasion
    - (C) involving, usually, partaking in a "pot blessing" meal
    - (D) shooting the breeze in a small study group
    - (E) or playing some sport with others from the church
  - b. for others, the word may be used in a technical sense of a group of people in the army, in a union or in a partnership who are involved in a common occupation, such as
    - (A) Tolkien's use in the title, 'The Fellowship of the Ring'
    - (B) or James' and John's partnership with Peter in the fishing business (Luke 5:10)
  - c. but this idea of fellowship is not particularly Christian
    - (A) it is one that a group of lodge brothers or a service club can equally well have
    - (B) or that can be experienced by classmates or workmates getting together for a good time
  - d. these things may be a result of Christian fellowship but they are not the essence of Christian fellowship
    - (A) it is much more than socializing
    - (B) it is not simply even God-centred events
3. the Greek word, koinonia, that is translated 'fellowship'
  - a. can also be translated as 'communion'
  - b. but this may not be a great deal of help
  - c. because for many of us, 'communion' is that ceremony that is held once a month in which we remember the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins
  - d. the meaning of this word, 'koinonia' is twofold: <sup>-(2)}</sup>.
    - (A) to share together, to have in common
    - (B) to share with others, both
      - (1) materially, as when the early disciples considered their possessions to be in common so that the poor in their midst had their needs met

(2) spiritually, as in Acts 2:42, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (NAS)

(C) and these two meanings, 'to share together' and 'to share with' naturally flow one from the other

e. but in first John, it is the first meaning, 'to share together' that is principally in view

(A) This first focuses on relationships, not activities.

(B) We share a common life with other believers, with God

4. without this ongoing fellowship with God the Christian life is missing the key ingredient God purposed for it

a. a church leader, gave an arresting testimony. As a child, he says, he watched his family's black and white TV, wishing that he could get a clearer picture. But he was glad they had even that unsatisfactory set. Then his family learned that an outside antenna was needed. "Suddenly," he said, "we found that we could get clear and distinct pictures. Our enjoyment was transformed." Then he draws this comparison: "Life without a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is like the television without the antenna." <sup>{3}</sup>. {now it's HD cable!}

b. within the first few sentences of Augustine's 'Confessions', he says this, 'Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee'

c. and someone else has said, 'there is a God-shaped hole in every person's soul waiting to be filled'

5. Fellowship is the life we have in common with God's children coming from our faith relationship with the Living God

C. Its Basis is True

1. verse 2 says, "... we beheld and we bear witness and we announce to you the eternal life..."

2. former U. S. President Jimmy Carter tells this story of an event before he became president: <sup>{4}</sup>.

a. In 1976, I was invited to speak to the 17,000 delegates assembled for the Southern Baptist Convention. ... Three of us were asked to represent Baptist men, and we were requested to limit our speeches to five minutes each.

b. I was very concerned ... because the first speaker was the eloquent and charismatic Billy Graham, and

I had to follow him. And then I was somewhat relieved, because the person speaking after me was a truck driver. ... but not well educated, and I thought to myself, "Well, I suppose that at least I'll sound good compared to him."

- c. ... waiting to be introduced, the truck driver told me he had never made a speech in his life. "I don't think I can live through it," he said. "I just can't do it." He was drenched with sweat, and I was barely able to prevent his fleeing. Billy Graham gave one of his usual forceful and inspiring talks, and I did the best I could with my own remarks.
- d. Then the truck driver got up, and for a long time he just stood there. Someone took him a glass of water, and he almost mumbled into the microphone. "I was always drunk, and didn't have any friends. The only people I knew were men like me who hung around the bars in the town where I lived." Then someone ... told him about Christ, and he wanted to tell other people. He studied the Bible and talked to some men in the local church where he became a member. The only places he felt at ease were barrooms, and he began to talk to customers there. The bartender told him he was ruining his business and should find some other place to make a nuisance of himself.
- e. But ... eventually the folks in the bar looked forward to asking him questions. He said, "At first they treated me like a joke, but I kept up with the questions and when I couldn't answer one, I went and got the answer and came back with it. Fourteen of my friends became Christians."...
- f. The truck driver's speech, of course, was the highlight of the convention. I don't believe anyone who was there will ever forget that five-minute fumbling statement, or remember what I or even Billy Graham had to say.
- g. that speech was powerful because it was the truck driver's own personal experience

3. we talked about it last week and again in our introduction

- a. the things that John is telling us today in these verses
  - (A) and in the rest of the book as we shall look at it
  - (B) were things coming from his own personal experience
- b. the words that he uses are clear
  - (A) these experiences were not hallucinations, nor dreams, nor wishful thinking
  - (B) they were plain, hard facts
  - (C) though they were spiritual in character

- (D) they were apprehended by his physical senses
  - (E) he scrutinized them
  - (F) he examined them
  - (G) he tested them day by day
- c. and the result was this
- (A) John knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God
  - (B) John knew that Jesus Christ was eternal life
  - (C) John knew that eternal life was a fellowship, a personal relationship based upon personally knowing God
  - (D) we read last week John's record of Jesus words in John 17:3, and we repeat them: *"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."* (NAS)

4. it is a true and incontrovertible fact, says John, to which I can bear witness: eternal life, fellowship with God is a reality

#### D. It Involves God and Man

1. then we read in verse 3, *what we beheld and what we heard, this also we proclaim to you in order that you may have fellowship with us. Even that fellowship of ours which is in fact with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.*
2. John leaps from speaking about eternal life in verse 2 to speaking of fellowship in verse 3
  - a. this is no change of subject
  - b. we have already connected the two
  - c. but let us make that connection a little more secure
3. eternal life is not that merely because it has the quality of being everlasting
  - a. being everlasting may be either good or bad
  - b. every person that has ever lived has an everlasting spirit
  - c. that can result in either great blessing or great suffering

- d. the Bible speaks of everlasting life
  - e. but it also speaks of everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46) and everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
  - f. no, eternal life is eternal because it involves a relationship with One who is the Eternal, it is life because it involves a relationship with One who is Life in Himself, the Living God
4. Eternal life is the ongoing fellowship of the created with the Creator, of our living with the Living God
- a. A happy Christian met an Irish peddler one day and said to him, "It's a grand thing to be saved." "Aye," said the peddler, "It is. But I think something is equally as good as that." "What can you possibly think is equal to salvation?" "The companionship of the Man who has saved me," was the reply. <sup>-(5)</sup>.
  - b. if you go outside and light a match, it will take a little over a second for the light from that match to reach the orbit of the moon, about 8 1/3 minutes to reach the distance of the sun, about 5 1/2 hours to reach the mean orbit of the former planet, Pluto; but, right where you sit this morning, if you in your heart of hearts breath out a word of prayer or praise, of adoration or need, to the great God that this entire universe is too minuscule to contain, in that instant God hears ... that is the fellowship we have with God

#### E. Its Result is Joy

1. In verse 4 John tells us, "These things we are writing in order that our joy may be completed."
2. Our God is a gracious, kindly, loving God
  - a. His desire for us is that we know joy
  - b. joy is not mere happiness resulting from the circumstances in which we find ourselves
  - c. joy is not a passing feeling in a passing moment
  - d. but it is the rejoicing that overflows the heart because we are at peace and in fellowship with the Eternal God; it is a fulfilled life, or in David's words, "... thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalms 23:5b-6 AV)

3. the hymn-writer put the joy of fellowship with God thusly:

His for ever, only His;  
Who the Lord and me shall part?  
Ah, with what a rest of bliss  
Christ can fill the loving heart!  
Heaven and earth may fade and flee,  
First-born light in gloom decline;  
But, while God and I shall be,  
I am His, and He is mine. <sup>-(6)</sup>.

F. Are you lonely this morning? ... overwhelmed? ... discouraged? ... sad? It is easy to get that way, to be tempted to look down rather than up. May we this morning share in the joy of having a vibrant relationship, a fellowship with the Eternal God. This relationship is to be nurtured by "Sitting at the feet of Jesus"; our closing hymn.

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. A nice short summary by Jerry Bridges is found in Kerux illustrations #4031
3. From Daily Bread, ‘The Needed Antenna’, Kerux illustration #18259
4. The Truck Driver’s Powerful Testimony, Jimmy Carter – Kerux illustration #29370
5. ‘Fellowship with the Father’ – Kerux illustration #21446
6. “I Am His and He Is Mine” by Rev. George Wade Robinson (1836-1877)