

What Does Fellowship With God Look Like? (Part 1)

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard..." In other words, that which was from the beginning - this Word which was in the beginning. He has become incarnate so that John and the other apostles could hear Him. "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. 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. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us." Now notice that. We proclaim this message based on what we have seen and heard - we proclaim to you with a purpose, and that purpose is that you too may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Very often when you ask somebody about 1 John or maybe this swims around in your own minds, we think about the purpose for which 1 John was written. Often, 1 John 5:13 is what people go to. 1 John 5:13 says this: "I write these things to you..." Again, he's giving a reason for why he is writing. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." And people look at that and assurance seems to be one of the motives here. But I would just come back to 1:3 and say in the very beginning of this letter, if there is a predominant reason that John is setting forth right at the beginning - and I think we'll see this as we go through this letter. (incomplete thought) Time and again, what we are going to find throughout 1 John is expressions of what the fellowship looks like that we have with the Father. And it really is that if we have eyes to see.

Let's keep reading here - v. 4. 1 John 1:4 "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." V. 5, "This is the message we have heard from Him..." John is saying this is the message we apostles have heard from Christ. "...And proclaim to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Now that's a very interesting statement. It's as though John just kind of says: When you sum up all that Jesus taught us, if you could put it in one statement, that really seems like what he's doing here. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 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. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."

Now, I don't want to move away from this idea of fellowship with God anytime soon. Because I think that there is a lot for us to consider about this. I want you to think. You may recall, Jesus Christ gave a purpose for why He came into the world. Do you remember what He told Pilate? For this reason... For this purpose... I've come into the world. Why? What was it?

Truth. To bear witness to the truth. What truth? Do you remember what He said? Jesus came into this world and when He came to people He did not say: "This is My truth." "It comes from Me." Do you remember what He said or how He said it? He said it this way: He said, "My teaching is not Mine..." Whose was it? It was the Father's. He said that it was teaching "of Him who sent Me." He came with the words of life from the Father. (incomplete thought)

Now think about this. Jesus is the prototype apostle. Do you know that the author of Hebrews actually calls Him what - what does he call Him? The Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He is the first apostle. What's an apostle? This is one sent. Specifically, one sent with a message to proclaim. Christ is that Apostle. He came. He came from His Father. He came with a message. He was the first one that was sent with these words of life to shine on those who sit in this darkness, the shadows of sin and death. He came. He came to expose light. Well, you know what happened? The Lord was not going to be here long. And as His time was drawing to an end when He would depart out of this world and return to His Father, what was He doing? I mean, just think about John 14, 15, 16. What is that all about? He's leaving. What's He doing? He's preparing these who He said: You guys are now going to be My witnesses. In other words, I came from My Father with a message. This was not My message. It was His. It was the message of Him who sent Me. Now I'm going out of the world and I'm leaving you. He carefully was training and discipling men who would remain in the world. He wasn't praying that God would take them out of the world, because they need to remain in the world. And through all the ages, we need to remain in the world.

Why? Because we are going to have this message. We are going to bear witness to it. He was training men who would remain in the world and continue proclaiming the very message that He Himself had received from His Father. And the thing about all this, the thing that I'm really building up to is this: The apostles did not and were never asked to simply dream up a message. The apostles were not asked to dream up their own thing. What were they to do? They were to pass on to mankind the revelation that they received from God the Son which He had received from God the Father. And that's what this is all about. We have John coming and he's giving us the fact that he saw this. He was a witness to it. And I'll tell you this, believing this divine revelation that these apostles are handing forth is life and death. And it's clear to me the way he talks here, the way he so strongly, badly is interested in persuading us - it's clear John understands that this message requires the strongest evidence. You get the feeling. We heard it. Our hands touched it. You get this feeling: John is saying, look, we did not believe this lightly and we don't expect you to. You know one of the things that often Christians are charged with? We're charged with having a blind faith. But that's not the idea here. John and the other apostles did not believe these things lightly. They don't expect us to just accept these things on a whim. John's faith was solid. It was built on something. It was built on what his eyeballs saw. (incomplete thought)

You think about these guys. Their faith was not some irrational thing of crazy men. You think about what they did. They looked at Him. They looked at His works. They were able to examine. They saw whole crowds healed. Think about them walking back with a basket full of the remnants leftover from the feeding of the 5,000. You remember, there were 12 baskets. That number was probably not random. It was meant that each one of those apostles would have a basket for themselves. So while they're coming back with it, their eyeballs are looking at

it. They're processing. They're registering. This five loaves, two fish - now we have 12 baskets full and that's what's leftover. They processed. Their faith was calm. It was collected. It was rational. It was built on historical truths. It was not some craziness. It was not something that came from dreams and hallucinations. These men weighed these things out. The apostles personally observed these things. John is saying: Hey, my preaching is not just some hearsay or opinions or myths or some kind of tradition or conjecture. You get the idea in all of this John is certain. You get that when you read John. You don't see John waffling. It's like: We know. We know. We've seen this.

Over against what? (incomplete thought) Remember this. Remember 1 John 2:26. "I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you." There were deceivers that were afoot in the land. And you know what? Those who do not observe Christ firsthand, what do they do? We have people all over the place. They stand over there and they want to say: Oh, no, no, no. It didn't happen that way. No, Jesus was not really like that. He wasn't that way. But John is saying what use is it for someone standing over there at a distance to argue that Jesus Christ is different from what the apostles say He is. John says it's of no use. We've seen Him. We've seen the living Christ with our own eyes. We've touched. We've heard. John says we're no fools. (incomplete thought) You remember that's what Peter said. Lord, we did give everything up. They were no fools for doing it.

There's a lot of people out there that are fools. There are a lot of people that follow the Jim Jones' in this world and they go off to Waco. There are all sorts of people following error and following leaders that are in error. It's happening all over the place. But he's saying we're not fools. We're no fools for laying down our lives. John seems to mock at the idea that trusting Christ is just some blind, foolish faith as though what? Believers are just idiots who believe in Christ contrary to all that's reasonable, reliable, rational. John did his investigation. He analyzed. You can see those guys. Their eyes were on Christ. Not only did they look at baskets, they saw people. They saw people rise from the dead. They saw this firsthand. Jesus is saying I'm doing this in your sight that you guys might believe. They saw Him. They saw the resurrected Christ. (incomplete thought)

And you know, not only that, but when you read the Gospels, it says later on they recalled that Scripture said... like "zeal for Your house..." Things like that. What they were doing was they were going to the Old Testament Scriptures and they were saying: this all lines up! This works! This is Him! Everything points to it being Him. That's what's happening. He saw the miracles. He saw the fulfillment of prophecy. They knew that John the Baptist had come. There was a forerunner that was predicted and there he was and he came and he left. You know, even the enemies, they said we couldn't take Him. No man speaks like Him. Can you imagine they sat under His wisdom day by day? And if people at a distance could say the demons don't talk like that... Can somebody with demons open the eyes...? Even if those at a distance - can you imagine those guys that sat under His shadow and heard Him talk and they recognized? You know what, they knew Him closely enough that there was no sin in Him. They saw that. This Man doesn't lie. This Man doesn't cheat. This Man doesn't steal. He's blown away by it.

You go to 1 John 5:20. "We know the Son of God has come." We know it. They knew it. They had no doubts about it. And here they are telling us. And you know the interesting thing

about it is 2,000 years later, God has preserved their words, and people are still being transformed by them. People are being saved by them. People are being helped by them.

But here's the thing, John's message of certainty is not just that the Son of God has come. John is also thoroughly convinced and through the core of his being. You can see it there in 1 John 1:3. What's really got him gripped is that he himself personally possesses what he calls "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Notice this. 1 John 1:3. "Indeed..." You see that word? "Indeed our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." Think about when John writes this. Most of the biblical scholars, they assume he's probably an old man at the point he's writing. But you know what? Whether he is or he's in mid-life, whatever - we know that this is after Christ has come and gone. The Lord ascended long ago likely. John isn't saying that his fellowship was with the Son, like back then, when he laid at Jesus' side. He's saying "is." My fellowship "is." Our fellowship - us apostles - we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son and we have it even now. Even though Christ had physically departed out of this world maybe some six decades before, John says that his fellowship is - currently, now, it's real, it's valid, it's vivid, it's vibrant, it's alive, it's present. and it's with the Father and with His Son. How does that happen? Well, because it's a supernatural fellowship. It transcends time. It transcends place.

Now, here's the thing. I don't want to move away from fellowship because it's one of the most precious and valuable things that we have as true Christians. (incomplete thought) Look, one of the concerns undoubtedly that John has in writing this letter, as much as to give assurance to the true, this book undoubtedly has been used repeatedly to open the eyes of those who are still blind but think it's all okay. I want to hit on fellowship, for one, I want us to recognize and realize what treasure we have. And I want you that don't have this fellowship to cry out to God to rescue you. If there's anything at the heart of true Christianity it's right here. If there's anything about what eternal life is all about, it's right here. And so, the title of my message today is: What Does Fellowship With God Look Like? And I don't know how many messages it's going to take me to look at these, but we're going to start. I know this, John has fellowship with the Father and the Son and he wants us to have it too and he speaks the way he speaks so that you and I might have it as well. His desire is that we would get swallowed up in this thing. This is his joy, that our joy might be full. Maybe that's our joy as well - being full because we have the fellowship. His joy being full because he sees others being swallowed up into this fellowship. He says, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship..." That's the idea. "...With us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ."

Now, we're going to hit on this a few times. Don't get weary of this, but just think. Fellowship. We need to really accurately understand the concept. It's the Greek word "koinonia." You've heard that word - most of you have, I don't doubt. Sometimes "communion." The word expresses the idea of: you have a person here, you have a person here. It can be two people. It can be more than two people. But it's the fact that you have two or more who share the same things. When you participate in the same thing I participate in, we have fellowship in that thing. It is that which we have together. We have in common. Now, koinonia as John is using it has to do with sharing what John and the other apostles themselves have in common with the Father and with His Christ. Now it is worth noting, one of the lexicons that I have, actually looks at the

secular Greek from 2,000 years ago. It's interesting. This word *koinonia* was used of the closest human relationships. Caesar Augustus - you may know that name. In his day, the word *koinonia* was used to describe a marriage covenant. On an even more intimate level, this term is also used in secular Greek to describe the marriage bed. And that ought not to be difficult for us to understand because as you go to marriage, there's closer sharing. As you go to the marriage bed, there's even closer sharing. This is sharing on the deepest level. And as we've said before, that marriage is just a shadow. That's what we're talking about here. We're talking about sharing with God at the most intimate of levels. And I hope this just helps us to start to realize the incredible privilege that we as saved sinners - we have in communion or in common or partakers with, sharers with the infinitely holy God. God allows us to share with Him at the deepest levels.

This is what I want to start looking at today. What does God share with us? What is it? What does God, when He saves you and He brings you to Himself, when He knows you - when He takes you unto Himself for the reality of what marriage is just a shadow, what is it that He shares with you that He has? That's what we want to think about. What does fellowship with God look like? And all I can cover today is three of the things. What do we have in common with God? This is the question of the hour. What is the basis for this fellowship? I guess I'd maybe ask it this way: What is the basis for this term fellowship even being used? I mean he's using it for a purpose. Why? What is it that a saved sinner actually shares in common with God the Father and God the Son?

So here's where it begins. Here's the first thing. You're going to see it from 1 John. The very first thing, the very first place where our fellowship begins - true fellowship - you'll never have fellowship with God without this. The truest most intimate fellowship with God is based on the truth that God has revealed about His Son. Now don't despise that. Don't say, oh, that's obvious. Let's think about this for a second. Look at 1:3. "That which we have seen and heard..." What did he see and hear? What's "that"? That which we have seen. Notice "that" in v. 3 is the same "that" that verse 1 starts with. "That which was from the beginning." V. 3, "That which we have seen and heard." He's speaking about Christ. He's speaking about the truths, the things that they heard, the things that they saw, the things that were manifest, the things that they touched that pertained to Christ. That. That, that, that which we have seen and heard of Christ, of Him who was the Word, who was in the beginning. That One who became incarnate. The Word became flesh. We touched Him. All that we saw. All that we heard. "We proclaim also to you, so that..." You notice that connection. "So that you too may have fellowship with us." Oh brethren, just very quickly, look at 1 John 2:22. "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?"

Now do you see this? A liar is a person who does not have fellowship with the Father. You're going to see these two categories throughout 1 John. You have fellowship. You don't have fellowship. You're a liar. You're not a liar. You're in the truth. You're not in the truth. These things go back and forth. You basically have two camps here and John calls them by lots of different names, but who is the liar? Who is the guy on the outside? Who is the guy that does not have fellowship with God? "He who denies that Jesus is the Christ." You see what he's saying? Not that denies Jesus existed, but it's just you have wrong views about Christ. "This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son." Wait. How does he deny the Father? You

were just saying that he denied that Jesus is the Christ. Yes, but to deny Jesus is the Christ is to deny what the Father said about the Son. It's to deny the Father as well. It's to be out of communion, out of step to not share.

When God saves a sinner and He brings them to Himself, do you know what He does? He opens their eyes to who Christ is. Oh, that is central! That is key! Look at 4:2. "By this you know the Spirit of God, and every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. You see, "that which is from God" confesses the right things about Jesus Christ. If you go to 5:1, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him." If you go to 5:10, "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son."

You see that? Those of us in communion, do you know what we share? We share the testimony that God bears concerning His Son. We believe Christ to be who the Father says that Christ is. Listen, fellowship that is not based on what God has revealed about Jesus Christ is never ever true fellowship. Did you all get that? We live in an ecumenical age where it is just expected that we are going to accept one another if we're loving. "Oh, you guys are Christians? You say that you're loving." Isn't that what Christianity is viewed as? It's viewed as these people who are loving. It's viewed as these people who are not going to be aggressive; these people who are just going to be kind to everybody and they're going to accept everybody. And that's what we're slapped in the face with. How can you guys say you're Christians and you act so unloving? Listen, if there was anybody who was an apostle of love it was John himself. And if there's anybody that came along and would have been thought today to be narrow and bigoted, extreme and unloving, it's him! I mean, if there was anybody that firmly stood on the truth of Scripture as revealed about Christ and His work - you know what the world likes to say? Doctrine what? Divides. Hm... Doctrine divides. In the name of love, we should just be tolerant. You know what John says? He says that's garbage. At the most important level, what in the world do we share in common with people who speak of Jesus but deny what Scripture teaches about Him? We share nothing in common with them. Nothing!

And you know what? The Catholics come along and they want to tell us about a Jesus who's inferior to Mary. And if they don't admit it, they're liars. I used to be a Catholic. I know exactly. Mary is exalted. Christ is not. That is not the Christ of the Scriptures. Tawfiq comes out of Islam. Any Muslim who wants to tell you they have a Christian view of Jesus Christ, they're liars. It is not true. JW's come to your door. They're liars. They do not believe in the Christ of Scripture. Neither do the Mormons. These Oneness Pentecostals do not know Christ. Of course doctrine divides! But Scripture would have us divide away from the heretics, would they not? I mean, here comes John. John is quite passionate. Here the Apostle of Love - what does he say? No matter who comes to your door, just look at them with dove's eyes and welcome them into your house? That's not what he says. In 2 John 1:9, "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ..." Another word for teaching - doctrine. The doctrine of Christ. This is essential. This is what John is hitting on. "Everyone who goes on ahead..." Ahead of what? Ahead of the apostolic truth. That which God has revealed to His Son, His Son has revealed - that message which God gave to the Son. That's probably a better way to say it. And

that He revealed to His apostles and they have in turn revealed to us. That is the correct teaching of Christ. And if they don't have that, if they don't abide there, if they go on ahead of that, if they move beyond it as though that's some good thing, they always come - those that reject the teaching of Christ in Scripture, they always come as though they have some new knowledge, some mystical revelation, something we need to figure out, something if we're really going to be spiritual, we need to be enlightened to as well. But he's saying look, if they don't abide in that teaching of Christ, that doctrine of Christ, they don't have God. "Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." And he says this in v. 10, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting. For whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works." John allows of no fellowship with heretics. And heresy is not just somebody that comes along and says you're saved by works. It's not just somebody that comes along and is an atheist and denies the existence of God altogether. I'll guarantee these deceivers that are talked about in chapter 2, they were talking about Christ. They were talking about Jesus. When he says they don't continue and abide in this doctrine of Christ, it's got to do with who Christ is as a Person - His work. But they weren't teaching according to the apostle's doctrine.

Certainly, John is an apostle of love. But I'll tell you this, he never encourages love or fellowship with those who are not straight on Christ. I'm not talking about a person who is genuinely inquiring, but they come from a background where it's just all ignorance and they're ready for the light. I'm talking about people who are insisting that their deviant views are right. They would go about to teach. You remember, they're seeking to deceive. They're people that ignore, reject what Scripture says. Never encourages love or fellowship with those that are not straight on the doctrine of Christ.

And brethren, do we not know this personally? You know if there's anything that we do know - Christian, before you were saved, I know how it was with me. I mean, coming out of the Catholic background - I had high views of Mary. I did. You had high views of Mohammed. That's the way it is. But what happened when God saved us? Did He not welcome us into revealing the glory of Christ to us? I mean, I just look at the Puritan paperback on my shelf that says "The Glory of Christ" and something jumps inside me. Does that happen to you? Why? Why? Because suddenly, what God sees in His Son; what God finds ravishing, beautiful, just glorious in His Son, He's welcomed us into that. We share that with the Father. We share with the Father a delight in the Son.

When we were lost, Christ was small. "Oh, He's not God. He's the Son of God." Do you know, when I was lost I would not swear using the name of God, but I would swear using the name of Christ. Because I felt like that's nothing. Brethren, to our shame we know how little we saw Christ to be. What we have here is the Father bringing us in and tucking us under His arm and saying: "Behold My Son." We have communion there that He's allowing us. He's opening our eyes. He's allowing us to see as it is. Some of you came out of a charismatic background. You know who's exalted there? The Holy Spirit. This is how it is. What's that? (from the room) Falsely identified. Tim: Yeah, falsely identified. The true Spirit is right there with the Father and the Son saying behold the glories of the Son, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In every way that Christ can be made preeminent, the true Christian now finds delight. I'm not saying our hearts are fever pitch every day. But as a rule, when we hear the name of Jesus

Christ - Oh, I used to rake His name through the mud, and once I was saved in the beginning, I couldn't even say "Jesus Christ" because to me it was a profanity. I had to purposely think "Christ Jesus." Christ Jesus. Again, to my shame, but oh it was like a knife.

I can remember as a young believer, I was at Madison Square Gardens. I was there on a project and one of the guys working on one of the crews up in the stands, he just cried out some blasphemous thing concerning Christ and it was just like a knife. Why? Because we love Him now. We find Him precious now. That we share with the Father. That is no small thing! That is the starting point of our fellowship with the Father. Our delight is in all that Christ is. That we have in common with God. The world knows not of this.

Christ when He's leaving in His prayer to His Father - He had this desire that we would be where He is, that we might see His glory. This is the desire of the Godhead. The desire of the Godhead is to reveal the glory of Christ to us that we might see Christ as He is. That is the first stage of fellowship. And every true Christian in this room knows that experientially. You know. To you Christ is precious and He is more precious - you see, God so loved the world. How much? So much that Romans 8:32 says - the way the argumentation from the greater to the lesser - all other things are inferior. Christ is He which is preeminent above all. And what God has done is He's welcomed us into this select circle along with John and Peter and the rest of the apostles. To us who believe Jesus Christ is precious. He is the most precious to the Father. He is His delight. And He welcomes us into that. Oh brethren, on the most basic level our fellowship with God is in these truths and doctrines. The glories of Christ.

The second thing. The truth about ourselves. Now I get this from v. 8. 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." You can see from v. 6 - what I want you to notice is this: Is in v. 8, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." I recognize that it doesn't talk directly about fellowship, but like I said before, there are really only two camps all the way through here. And in v. 6, you can see what's used interchangeably. What do I mean by that? Well, let's read v. 6. "If we say we have fellowship..." There's our word "fellowship." "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in the darkness, we lie..." And you might expect this: "And we do not have fellowship with Him." See, you're saying you have fellowship with Him. We walk in the darkness. We're liars. We don't have fellowship with Him. Yeah, but he doesn't give us that answer. He doesn't say that. What he says is "you do not practice the truth." You get the idea that what? Not practicing the truth and not being in fellowship with God is the same thing. That's what we're faced with here.

Now remember, fellowship here has to do with what I have in common with God. "If I say I have no sin..." You know what I don't have in common with God? His view of me. That's one of the things that we share in common with God is a right and proper view of self. V. 9 takes us even a step further into the fellowship with God concerning my sins. I share with Him. I commune with Him. I talk with Him. I interact with Him as I confess to Him. Now think about this. Sometime we might think, oh, well, when I sin, if there's anything that disrupts my fellowship with God, it's sin. And yet, I want you to picture this: If there is a picture that John is hitting on that is absolutely consistent with fellowship with God, look at the penitent sinner with his face to the ground as he's confessing his sin to the Father.

And I'll tell you this, don't you dare - Christian, don't let the devil at all deceive you into thinking that when you sin, your fellowship with God is wrecked and you must stand far off and do penance before you can come close again. Look, if you're a child of God and your whole desire is with bowed head to get before Him that you might unload your guilt, oh, what a sign of fellowship that is! Why? Because you're one with Him in seeing your sin. He sees it. He knows who you are! And brothers and sisters, He designed sanctification to not be complete in this life. He could have saved us and bang! Instead of being born again in a way that now we have to go all the way to death, and go through this time, that from one degree of glory to another, we are being transformed. He could have caused us to be born again and bang! He could have made us perfect. Of course He could have! The reason He didn't was on purpose. Look, does God know that we struggle with the passions of the flesh? Does He know about the onslaughts of the world and the devil? Does He know the times we fall? Does He know those things? Brethren, if there's ever a time that we're in communion with God, it's when we go out and weep bitterly like Peter did. Oh, that's communion. Why? Because what I'm doing as I confess my sin, as I weep before Him, is I am one with God in that He sees my sin. I see my sin. I'm confessing it as evil. He knows it's evil. You see, there's a oneness. There's a communion. And again, when we were lost, we weren't that way. You know what? I doubt many of you came from some perfectionist background. That's not where we're at. When it says we have no sin, oh, think about how you were when you were lost. "Well, you know, everybody's a sinner," we casually, trivially said. That's not even a word. Trivially.

Brethren, I can remember one night I had MacArthur's book open - "The Gospel According to Jesus." And I can remember it was like nothing I had ever experienced in my life before. I was overcome by a sense of my wickedness and the depth of my sin in a way that I knew God would only be righteous if He sent me to hell. I saw I deserved it. Listen, when we come before God and we agree with God on who we are, that is to have fellowship. And when we were lost, we weren't there. "Oh yeah, we're sinners, but we're not that bad." God looked at us and said you're all bad. We were not in communion with regards to ourselves. Fellowship with God is when in confession, I'm in step with God about my sins. I'm on the same page. He and I agree that my sin is bad. That is fellowship. We share a common view of me.

The thing is, don't run. See, when we fall into sin as Christians, to run is to be out of step or to fall to Satan's temptations. "You think He wants anything to do with you right now?" See, fellowship is to fall down and confess that. Brethren, fellowship is broken in a relationship when we hide things. Wives, isn't it true? If your husband is hiding things from you, you're going to say, that does not help communion, fellowship, closeness, intimacy in our family - especially when the things that you withhold are offenses you commit against them. God would have us confess. God would have us open up. How much more fellowship is wrecked when the thing that I hide is a wrong that I've committed against God. You know, you go prancing around before God as though everything is just fine when you've openly offended Him. Remember, we're dealing with a relationship. This is relationship. He designed a man and a woman in relationship to show us He is a real Person - three Persons. He is a God with feeling. He is a God with affection. He is a God who is personal. He wants close - we hear this overused "personal relationship with God." But get past again the triviality of how the world uses that. God does want that! He wants closeness. He wants intimacy with His people. And oh, how

fellowship-killing when we openly have offended God and we walk around like everything's just fine.

You know, I got to thinking about this. How might things have been different for Adam? Do you remember how Adam was? "Adam, where are you?" "Have you eaten of the tree that I told you not to eat from?" What does he say? "The woman You gave me..." Can you imagine how things might have been different if instead of blaming God for the kind of woman that he got, if he would have just closed his mouth and fell down on his face and only opened it to say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner"? How things might have been different. There's no indication.

Jeremiah 2:35, "Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying 'I have not sinned.'" Or how about Proverbs 28:13, "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Now look, I know John is dealing with those who have fellowship or those who don't have fellowship. Very black and white. Very in or out. Christian. Non-Christian. And in one sense, every Christian definitely has fellowship. I could say in one sense every married person has fellowship. But you know there's degrees of that - that closeness and intimacy and actual fellowship. There's a subjective element to this. Brethren, what Proverbs says is we don't just confess. Fellowship demands that you forsake as well as confess. To share with God, to be at one with God, to be in step with God, you must hate what He hates, detest what He detests.

Brethren, are you weighed down at times? Don't we get this way? Just weighed down with an exceeding sense of our sinfulness. You get these times where our sin stares us straight in the face. We feel the shame of that. Brethren, you feel dejected? You ever look at yourself and just feel like: I can't believe it. I can't believe I did that. I can't believe after I've walked with the Lord for so long that I'm not further. It's like the Hebrews saying - we say it to ourselves - at such a time as this, we ought to be way beyond where we are. We feel like there's such a lack of power to resist the temptations that overwhelm us. Brethren, so often, this makes us want to curl up, run away, go watch a movie - whatever. But brethren, when we feel a deep sense of our sin; when we feel a deep sense of the shame; when we feel powerlessness, you feel that! Look, so often that's just God inviting us to even deeper fellowship. You say, how so? I'm overwhelmed with this sense of that which seems like it would disfellowship me with God. The thing is He opens our eyes to see this. Why? To see what our sin really is. Does He want us walking around and thinking that just because we're Christians and we go and sin it's not that bad? No, it is bad! It's really bad. It's still just as bad. It's the sin that took and nailed Christ to the cross. It is that bad. And it is that shameful. And you know what? You have the sense of powerlessness? That's good. Because you know what? Without Christ, you are powerless. You know, when we have the shame of our sin stare us straight in the face and a sense of our powerlessness, that is really an indication of fellowship with God. Why? Because you're right in step with Him. Because your sin is that bad. And because you are that powerless without Christ.

Brethren, what we want to do is we want to recognize that God is being gracious to us. He's reminding us of how we are and who we are and what we are without Christ. That He's gracious and He's ready to forgive us afresh. And I don't mean legally. There are times when Scripture talks about confessing our sin and being washed or being forgiven. We don't denounce this doctrine of justification - that there is no condemnation and all our sin is put away. But you know, there's a relational aspect to walking with God. You hear about grieving the Spirit.

You know, people whose sins are forgiven can grieve the Spirit. What does that tell you? It tells you that on a relational level there can be grief with God. There can be things that need to be forgiven on that level. And what we want to do is when we're recognizing all the more who we are and how bad our sin is and how weak we are, what we want to do is just look to Him Who has so often been gracious to us. Ask Him to blot out our transgressions. Put them behind His back, hide His eyes from them. Throw them into the depths of the sea. Oh, we plead for mercy on behalf of Christ and what He's done. This is exactly fellowship with God. Look, denying your sin is not to be in fellowship with God. Not acknowledging your sin is not. When you've got wrong, bring it to Him. Bring it into the light. There's no safer place than just to bring it in the light. Confess it. Throw it out there.

Well, let's just touch one more. We share one more thing. We share in the truth about Christ. We share in the truth about ourselves. One more thing: Just as I wrap up, we share God's character in life and practice. Now where do I get this? I get this from v. 6 and 7. "If we say we have fellowship..." There's the word fellowship. "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." Notice this has to do with practice. It has to do with our walk. "If we walk..." Walk is synonymous to a way of life. How we live. "...We do not practice the truth." "But if we walk..." If the pattern, the direction of our life is 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." We have fellowship with one another. Not just with one another on the horizontal level, but with one another on the vertical level as well. We have fellowship with God. You can perceive from this text, the Christian shares with God what? Shares with God a place in the light. It's His light. God brings us into His light. So not only when we get saved does God share with us the beauty and glory, doctrine and truth and teaching of Christ, not only does He share with us how He sees us, what He knows to be true of us, He shares with us His light. A place in the light. But there's something more to our fellowship with God than just a standing, a place in the light. A Christian is practically in the light. He's one who walks in the light as God is in the light. Did Jesus not say this? You don't have to turn to it, just listen to it - John 8:12. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness." You see this? He draws us into the light. Where is that light found? That light is found in following Christ. It's found in imitating Christ. In fact, does not John say these very words in 2:6? "Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked." That's to be a true Christian - we walk like Christ. That's where the light is. There's a walk. God's light produces a certain kind of walk. Why? What could we liken light to? Light - we can see!

I can remember in my lost years, I had a bunch of high school buddies and we were talking about different things that would happen at night in the dark. One of my buddies said he was running across to a house down the street. We knew the house he was talking about. He was running full speed at night through the back yard and ran right into the end of a picnic table at a full run because he couldn't see it. That's what you do when you're in the dark. But you see, you don't run into it when you're in the light. Why? Because the light makes manifest. The light reveals. God has brought us into the realm where the lights are on.

Oh, how many people; how many Christians I've heard that have said: It was like I was in a room with the lights off and God turned the lights on. That's exactly right. That's the fellowship. God brings us into His light. You and I as Christians can perceive what the lost world

cannot perceive. And God's light - what does it do? It produces a certain kind of walk in those who have been enlightened by it. The light of God works in a man's soul. It works in how a man thinks. Why? Because it's flooding him with truth and how things really are. It shows him. He can see as God sees. Doesn't Scripture say that we have the mind of Christ? He sees suddenly the dread of sin. He sees hell. He sees the lostness of the world. He sees the wickedness of sin. He sees these things. It's all exposed. He sees sin cannot be hid from God. He sees that. All is exposed. There's no use hiding it. It's best to confess it. He sees eternity. He sees the preciousness of Christ. We've dealt with the preciousness of Christ. We've dealt with how we are in ourselves. But he sees the hopelessness of all else but Christ. He sees the triviality of the world. He's a child of light. All is light. God is light. Christ is light. The Word of God is light. Paul says this, "At one time, you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." You are light. You are light in the Lord. And he says "the fruit of light is found in all that's good and right and true." Doesn't this just radically expose all the false claims to fellowship with God? We've got people going around all over the place. "Yeah, I know God. I'm a Christian. I'm this." (Incomplete thought) Men and women always claim some "in" with God. How many people do you hear: "Me and God have this thing going." "I was sick one time and He healed me." But there's nothing that exposes the false so clearly and plainly as standing face-to-face with this God who is light. Men imagine they have fellowship with God. The Pharisees - wasn't it amazing? "We don't want to go into Herod's palace." Why? Because we don't want to be unfit to take of the Passover. And yet we're killing the true Passover Lamb. We're slaughtering Him. We're doing this amazingly wicked thing, but oh, we've got an "in" with God.

You know what kind of God we had? And many of you in here that don't know the Lord - all of you, if you don't know the Lord, you've not been brought into the light. So your image of God - listen, the devil's god is always the god that says, "You will not surely die." He is a god that condones your darkness. That's how I thought of God. I thought, yeah, I was living it up. I was living this life of sin. But I had this god in my imagination who just smiled on me no matter what I did. Did you have that kind of god? But, just watch people.

I've told this before, but I remember one night, I was laying on the floor. My brother was laying on the sofa. And I started telling him about God. And my brother said, "Well, if God is like that, you can have Him." Notice the world when you start showing them the God of Scripture. Their hair stands on end. They recoil. They don't want any God like that.

Just a last word. You know, there may be those who view this fellowship with God as though it's just some idle tale. Whatever. Football season's ready to start. That excites me a lot more. This is just some emotional spiritual buzz that people get when they listen to worship songs. But I'll tell you this, let the world scoff. Let false professors just look at you like deer in the headlights. They can deride. They can be indifferent to such things. But I'll tell you this, us believers who have been welcomed into the Lord's inner chambers, those of us that have had that, we know. We know that we've shared things with God. We recognize we have a privilege that we will not trade for all this world's silver and gold and its titles and its trophies. They can have their stuff. This is more precious to us than anything else. Those of us that tasted it - oh, we want so much more. It's not satisfying. It's not enough. But it's that which we want more than anything else - fellowship with God. Oh, it's so short of the fullness of what we really want, but isn't it the beginning? It's the foretaste of glory. That's what it is. It's like that sun that comes up

over the horizon or just the dawn's light before the sun comes up. It's an anticipation of an eternal day when we'll be swallowed up in this forever. That's what this is to us. Our hearts are panting after it. We go through these seasons of darkness. There are times - Christian, if there is something that we know it's when God turns His face from us in this world and we come up and we're looking and our hearts pants after You, O God, and we're looking around: Where has He gone? It's like Job. He says His smile used to be there over my tent, my dwelling place, and now, I look to the right; I look to the left. He's not there! If there's anything that causes our hearts to pine... But fellowship with God - is it not, brethren, to us it's that dawning of that eternal day. It's the first glimpses. You remember Bunyan's celestial city. They got up in these mountains and they were trying to focus in and see the city. That's what this is like. Whatever glory they were kind of unsteady in seeing it. That's how we are in this world. We're unsteady with it, but oh, there is a sweetness in this - God sharing with us, God bringing us in.

These are just the first three things. It's going to take at least another message to talk about, and I probably will not even touch every single one of the things that God shares with us, but these things are very distinct. These are things that John recognizes that are true in this fellowship. These three things: The Person of Christ. The doctrine concerning Christ. The realities about who we are. Brethren, there's not inconsistency here. The thing is if you're in fellowship with God as a practice, you walk in the light. That doesn't mean you're perfect yet, and there will be sin. It doesn't mean you practice sin. Practicing sin is to walk in the darkness. But there is sin. We recognize there's sin. And when we fall, we need to take it to our Father. We need to run to our Father. Don't fall for the lies.

I'm telling you. This is one of Satan's favorite strategies - is to come at you and tell you when you sin: Christ wants nothing to do with you. But when you see your sin, you know your sin - Look, you're going to sin! "I write to you that you don't sin." Little children - this is what John's all about. I write to you that you not sin. I want you to walk more fully, more fully, more fully in the light. But if you sin... What? You walk in the darkness and you have no fellowship with Him and you don't know Him? No! We have a Christ! The Christ - Jesus Christ. He is the Righteous One. He made propitiation for us. We can plead the blood. We can go and we can confess it. Our access is there. There's no condemnation. We have full free access. You go to Him. And just remember the fellowship. Oh, this is fellowship to be at one with God and to recognize the sin I just did, the sin I just committed against my wife, the sin I just committed against my children, the thing I just did, the misuse of my tongue - God sees it for what it is. The best thing to do - go out with Peter and weep bitterly and confess it. And you know, the next thing you'll find is He'll come alongside and He'll say, "Joe, do you love Me?" Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. Well, He sends us to His work.

Remember this, brethren. He did not design perfection to happen in this life. And He did that on purpose. And because He did, part of our fellowship with Him is going to be on a regular basis the picture of the man or the woman with the head bowed before God confessing because they see their sin as God sees it. They know it's exposed to Him and there's no sense hiding it and they want fellowship more than they want to go on not acknowledging that sin. If they know that it's going to grieve Him and bring some snare in there and some shadow over the fellowship, I want my fellowship more than I want to go on in my sin not confessing it. Do you not want that? Nothing between - is that not what the song says? Nothing between my soul and

the Savior. Don't let it go there. Cherish this fellowship above everything else. Oh brethren, I'm telling you there are depths that God has swept His people into this fellowship. Some of you likely - you can't put words to.

I can remember Charles Simeon. One of his friends came into his room and the lights were off and there was the picture of the penitent. He had been there confessing his sorrow for his sin. And God came to him in such ravishing fashion, as his friend found him, all he could say is, "Glory. Glory. Glory." That's the only word that could come out of him. Don't you want that? Nothing between, brethren. Nothing between. Foster these things. Foster them. Work at them. Cherish them. Nurture these things. Right views of Christ. Right views of self. And walking in the light. Immersing yourself in all that is good and right and true. Walk in the light. Imitate Christ. Follow Him. He's in the light. If you follow Him, you will not walk in the darkness. That light changes us. You're not going to just find it out there in the world. You're not going to find it looking at the sun. His light is here. His Word is a lamp unto our feet. This is where the light is. God is light. Christ is light. It's found in the Word of God. This is where it is. You cannot be in this communion - You cannot be close to God and walking close to Him and dwelling in this light and dwelling in this kind of fellowship on the subjective level if you're not in the Word of God. (incomplete thought) Look, if your devotional time in the Word of God just stinks, I'll guarantee your life stinks. And again, there's an objective reality in this fellowship. You're either in or you're out, but for those that are in, the fellowship is all over. But it's a relationship that has to be nourished. And if you're not abiding in the light of this Word, you shouldn't expect that you're going to have this gloriously victorious life.

Father, we pray that You would take us - take us into a greater and greater deeper knowledge, a deeper reality, a deeper experiential reality in all these areas and even more. Lord, I pray, I want - my desire in going through this and preaching this, Father, I desire that You would produce a hunger in the hearts of Your people that would long after this and press into the inner place and press for greater, deeper expressions and strive just like it is with a husband and a wife - we have to nurture relationships. We have to nurture fellowship. We have to nurture communion and closeness. We have to strive. It's not something that we can just neglect and think it's going to automatically happen. And Father, I pray that there would be a hunger, there would be a real thirsting in the brethren after this. I pray that when we move past this section that there would be a reality in a lot of people's lives beyond what they have known. I pray in Christ's name, Amen. You're dismissed.