

Godly Fellowship
1st John 1:1-7

Responsive Psalm 1
Luke 24:36-53
1 Corinthians 1:1-10

Last week we did a bit of an overview of this book, looking at the major themes that John writes about. This week we are going to start diving into it verse by verse and work our way through the 5 chapters of this book. I have a feeling that we are not going to actually be in this book very long due to the nature of the writing, we may end up taking some pretty big chunks at a time.

I want to just take a moment to go back and refresh our memory of last week. Last week in the overview we did of this book we said that John has 5 major themes that run all the way through these 5 chapters. The 5 themes that he talks about throughout this book are, the Authority, and Truthfulness of God, The Humanity of Jesus, The relationship between believers and sin, the Significance of Jesus' death, and lastly that Love is proof of a relationship with God.

We won't spend the time going over each one of them again, since you can just listen to the previous recording if you need a refresher. I just wanted to mention them again because these are things that will be apparent as we work through 1st John and today we will be looking at one of these themes. Namely, the Humanity of Jesus Christ.

Also if you remember from last week, we said that John puts forth 3 tests for his readers to see if their faith is sure. The 3 tests that he sets forth are, doctrine, obedience, and love. The verse's that we will be looking at today deals with the 1st of these tests, The test of correct doctrine. John when he wrote this letter was more than likely addressing a group of false teachers that had arisen in the church who held to what is believed to be an early form of Gnosticism. These people believed that deliverance from the sins of the flesh came by gaining knowledge, the idea is that justification comes by the way of knowledge. There was a branch of these Gnostics who denied the incarnation of Christ, their thought that flesh is evil, and since flesh is evil there is no way that the messiah would have taken it on, the perfect God of knowledge would not be able to take on and would not take on sinful flesh.

These Gnostics also believed that through seeking justification by knowledge that they were able to transcend their sinfulness and become sinless themselves. They believed that they could reach a point in their holy knowledge and spirituality that sin in the flesh meant nothing. These 2 false beliefs are something that John addresses in his writing, and we see the beginning of this argument against them here in the first few verse's. What we see is John's first test, It is the test of right doctrine, which John starts out with the truth of the incarnation of Christ. The first test, is one of the themes...right doctrine about the humanity of Christ.

Starting out he says, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.

There is some debate here as to what John means by From the beginning, as to whether he is referring to the time of creation, or possibly the beginning of the Christian Era. In the context of his writing it seems to make the most sense that he is actually referring to the life and ministry of Christ, the beginning of the Christian Era, because he follows it up with saying that which we have heard, seen and touched so it seems that he is referring to the incarnation of Christ, the Word of Life and his

ministry, not the creation of the world.

This calls out right to the front the idea of Gnosticism, and I am sure those who were in the churches when this letter was read would notice it right away. This would probably was no small issue for them because here we have one of the apostles saying that he is a direct eye witness to Christ. It pretty much destroys any of the Gnostics arguments against the incarnation when you have an eye witness from someone such as John who was an apostle, and a well known pillar in the early church.

John says all of this because wants to make sure that his readers understand that Jesus is the promised messiah who has come, and put on flesh and that he, John, walked with him. When John says that he is a witness to the word of life, he isn't just referring to the gospel message, or scripture but is actually referring to Christ himself. Jesus himself is the word of life, and in the context of Johns writing here it only makes sense that he is referring to Christ himself and not just his message. This is an important distinction to make because in verse 2 he says that the life was manifested, it was revealed and made known to us. This is important because Without the revelation of Christ, without the gospel message there would be only darkness and destruction for this world. We are dependent on God's gracious self-revelation.

So right away we see the doctrine of the incarnation, the humanity of Jesus, but we also see here the eternal nature of Jesus. He not only lived here on this earth for a time, he also is eternal, everlasting. John says here in verse 2, the life was manifested and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the father and has manifested to us.

There is a tendency when we see the words, eternal life to think that it is referring to our future. An eternity in paradise, or an eternity in judgment. But I think John more specifically here is referring once again to Jesus Christ, who is the word, and through whom our eternal life in God rests. In the gospel of John, chapter 10:10 Christ says, I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

There is more to eternal life then what happens to our souls when we die, it isn't all just future, as there is a sense were it refers to life in the present as well. Jesus said that he came not only to give us life, but that we may have it more abundantly. Having life abundantly refers more to the present then to the future, but what does he mean to have life more abundantly?

There is a sense that we as Christians can live an abundant life. Not necessarily in earthly goods, it does not mean that you will be rich, or healthy, and that everything is going to go your way. If we look at John 4:14 Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman at the well, and he says that whoever drinks of the water that I should give them will never thirst, But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life, and in the same way chapter 6:35 Jesus says, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

Jesus isn't talking about physical hunger and thirst, and having an abundance of earthly things, but he is talking about a spiritual fulfillment that is only found in a life filled with the bread and, water of Christ, It is the age old philosophical question, what is the meaning of life. Only a life in Christ will truly find meaning, will truly be filled, and Jesus says will be filled abundantly, he will never thirst, or hunger. A Christian's eternal life will presently be filled in abundance by God's grace, and love bringing peace, joy, and understanding beyond what the world can hope for. As Colin Kruse says, "To have eternal life means to have one's spiritual hunger and thirst satisfied, to be raised up on the last day and to live forever, to have the light of the life so that one does not walk in darkness, to have abundant life

to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent and that, though we die, we will live.

Verse 3 John says again That which we, meaning the apostles have seen and heard we the apostles declare to you, that you may also have fellowship with us. Fellowship is a term that we are all quite familiar with here within the church, but it is not something you hear used often outside of the church. The Websters definition of fellowship is A friendly association especially with people who share one's interest, or alternatively, a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or claim.

Fellowship simply means to have things in common. John says he is declaring Christ that he has seen, so that so that may all have fellowship together in Christ. All believers everywhere share a commonality in God's grace, the indwelling of the spirit, we who believe have a common possession of God the father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The Christians fellowship comes because of our fellowship with God. That is exactly what John is say here in this verse, when he says, “and truly our fellowship is with the father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Our fellowship, our adoption as children of God is found in Christ and our fellowship with each other is because of Christ. John says that he is declaring the humanity of Christ, so that we may all have fellowship around correct doctrine and belief. To quote Blake White, he says “ We see in 1st John, just like we see in every other book of the bible, that right belief is vital to authentic Christianity. In other words, doctrine does matter. As D.A Carson, and Douglas Moo say in the Introduction to the New Testament “ There is no place for petty Guru's in the church who will not bow to apostolic admonition and authority. Johns Apostolic testimony here is authoritative.

Another way we could look at verse 3 here is to put it this way...The apostles proclaim the message of Christ so that they would have fellowship with the apostles and therefor with God the Father and his Son. Fellowship with God is bound in fellowship with the apostles. Apostolic authority is found throughout the New Testament and we must base our fellowship with God on the proclamation, and writing of the apostles found in scripture.

Also in these first 3 verse's we see another important detail. We see that history matters, If Christ did not appear in the flesh, if all of the things written in scripture about Christ did not come to pass, then Christianity is just an empty religion. But Christianity isn't a religion based around only tradition, or the dreams or words of a single man, but rather is played out throughout all of history. Events that we see recorded in scripture coincide with events that are also recorded in secular history, and throughout it all God is weaving together his perfect plan from the creation of the world, to the final culmination and 2nd coming of Christ.

In verse 4 John tells us one of the reasons he is writing. As we talked about last week throughout this book he says many times that “ this is why I write to you” and he has various reason's why he has done so and here we find the first one. He writes so that his readers may be full of joy. Why would this be so, what would make his readers full of joy? I think it simply is because of the fellowship that is shared amongst the brothers and sisters in Christ.

As Christians do you not feel great joy when you are in the company of other believers? The holy spirit working through us has a way to make even those who are complete strangers in the flesh to have a bond together in Christ. I have met many people throughout my life who I knew very little, if anything about but we shared Christ. There is a bond there that there is not with anyone else. There is no sweeter fellowship then that of brothers and sisters around the cross of Christ. It is refreshing to have that coworker that you can talk to, that you can pray for, and pray with, and share your hardships,

and encourage each other when you are surrounded by a world of sin and despair. There is no greater fellowship on this earth than that of a brother or sister in Christ.

That is one of the purposes of John's writing here, is that he wants to be sure that those who he cares for are fellowshiping with the right people, who have the right doctrine, and who have true faith. As Paul puts it in Corinthians, a bad crowd corrupts good morals. We are to be set apart, a people of God, for God, who are living in this world but are not slaves to it. How easily it is that we can slip aside, especially when we follow someone who we respect, or who seems to be knowledgeable. That is the danger of false teachers, who set themselves up as authority yet are teaching a false gospel, or in the case that John is writing about..a gospel of anti-Christ.

The bible warns of us to be careful who we fellowship with, I did a quick google search and it came up with 25 verses talking about making sure that we do not keep bad company. I will just quote a few quickly here,

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 14:7 Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge.

Proverbs 1: 10 and 11. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

Proverbs 22:24 and 25. Do not associate with a man given to anger, or go with a hot tempered man.

Romans 16:17. Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissension and hindrances according to the teaching you have learned, and turn away from them.

2nd Thessalonians 3:6, Now we command you brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition you received from us.

It is important who we fellowship with, now this does not mean that we cut ourselves off, build up a wall, live in a commune, and separate ourselves from society. This warning is for believers to not be caught up, or deceived by or led astray by false teachers, or those with false faith. How easy it can be for us to fall into peer pressure and do things we ought not. We can easily fall into things such as gossip, and rumor spreading without thinking about it when we are surrounded by those who do, or even the use of foul language for we may feel the desire to want to fit in, and hey everyone else is doing it. That is why it is important who we are around, who we spend our time with, and as the verses we read a minute ago all tell us to avoid such things, and such people who practice them.

John says here, he writes so our joy maybe full. He is seeking to build this true fellowship which is found in Christ, to put aside and turn away from those who are anti-Christ, who are causing problems and dissensions in the body of believers because of false doctrine.

Starting in verse 5, John furthering this point of fellowship around Christ, and correct doctrine. He says “ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in

Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with God, and 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Just as James was arguing, what we do, how we live our life, our actions matter. You can claim Christ, and faith all you want but if your life does not reflect God, then your claim is void and empty. God is light, and in him there is no darkness, if we say we know God, if we say that we believe in God, and that Christ is our Savior yet we still live in sin, and there is no real distinction between our life, and that of anyone else in the world then we are lying and we do not live a life of truth in God.

So in closing, John here is not only informing us about Christ himself, but he is also telling us to be wary who you enjoy close fellowship with, do not let your friends, or family lead you astray. Be discerning, yes, be judgmental people, be wary of those who may be wolves in sheep's clothing, guard yourself, flee from darkness, and abide in the light, as God is in the light, seek Godly fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.