

Studies in 1 John 02 Holiness-Fellowship

by John W. Bramhall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fellowship with God, the basis of which is life in Jesus Christ, and the evidence of a true Christian, which includes walking in the light, fellowship with other believers, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ.

Duration: 44:22

Topics: "Christian Living", "Fellowship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of walking in the light and not in darkness. He highlights three essential evidences of a true Christian: walking in the light, keeping God's commandments, and not denying the truth. The sermon also discusses the two main sections of the book of John: the Father with His family in chapters one and two, and the family representing the Father within the world in chapters three through five. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the unity of God's family and the need for Christians to live in accordance with their profession of faith.

Transcript

Shall we turn to the first epistle of John tonight, reading the whole chapter, chapter number one. John writing by the Holy Spirit, and declaring 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 of the word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full, this then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that 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 that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. May God bless the reading and hearing of his precious word. Once again we would say, it is upon the Holy Spirit alone, we would depend for the edification and the blessing we need from this precious holy book.

We thank God for his word, and that is a ministry both to the heart as well as to the conscience. To encourage the hearts of God's people, as well as perhaps to even prod their consciences, and even to bring a word in the gospel of his grace to reach the conscience of the soul of the insane. Now we noted in our preceding message, how the spirit of God through his servant John, brings before us this family epistle, where the father and his family are brought into view.

We noted particularly that the chapters can be divided into two great sections, chapters one and two, the father with his family, and then chapters three through five, where the family represents the father within the world. The introduction of the epistle has been very precious, to bring to us the manifestation, the incarnate life of our blessed God, in the person of his dear son when he was here upon the earth. That one whom John calls the word of life, the life and eternal life, and to know that God in all the glory and the deity and the greatness of his person, and in the greatness of that eternal life which he possessed, came down to this earth, and was manifested unto mankind.

The manifestation of that life covers from the beginning to the end of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage, when thus conceived by the Holy Ghost in the in the virgin womb, going down to his ultimate death, burial, resurrection, and return back to glory to the father. But let us never remember that same blessed one who became incarnate, is still incarnate, as the God-man in the glory of heaven above. Precious have we realized that John could and did say, we heard him, we saw him, we looked upon him, we gazed intently upon him, and our hands were able to handle him.

And what revelation it brought from the heart of God, to reveal the heart of the father to his children here below. Thus the great purpose of the Lord Jesus in coming to the earth, as you may read in John 11, when thus Caiaphas, schemed and plotted the death of the Lord Jesus as an expediency for the sake of the nation, saying that one man should die for the nation. And yet John by the Holy Spirit adds the words, that not only should he die for this nation, but that he should gather together in one, all the children of God.

For the express purpose of the coming of our Lord to the earth, included the gathering of the children to bring them to the father. One wonders, with great anticipation of that coming moment, when our savior will gather all the children together, some from earth, from glory some, seven only till he comes. And then when he gathers them together at that blessed return, presenting them to the father, he will say, behold I and the children whom thou hast given me.

What a day of rejoicing that will be for the father, for the son, as well as for the children. For the purpose of John writing this epistle, has brought before us that we might ask fellowship, apostolic fellowship with the apostles of old, for their fellowship was with the father, and with his son Jesus Christ. You and I who have been saved by his grace, have been brought through life eternal in Christ, into this blessed fellowship.

The basis of the fellowship, we repeat again with joy, is life. And this life is in his son, and all who have received that life, they're in the family of God, and they're in the fellowship which he has brought us into. Now let us go on and realize that as John has brought us into the truth of the fellowship with the father and with his son, it is that the joy of it may fill and flood our hearts in its experience.

And may I repeat with emphasis, I need it for my soul, the fellowship of the father and the fellowship of the son, as we declared in our preceding message, that fellowship is the father delighted in the son, and the son delighted in the father. And beloved, you and I can have no greater joy, nor the enjoyment of such fellowship as we have been brought into, when we are sharing with the father his delight with his son. When we are sharing with the son his delight with the father.

Now this brings before us in the remaining part of this chapter one, beginning at verse five, responsibility to the children of God. How we need to realize that with this relationship and fellowship, there is not the responsibility of the children in fellowship with the father. And that responsibility is indeed great.

When John presents the responsibility, he begins by the statement in verse five, if you notice, this then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. And John reveals the very character, the very nature of the father, and that nature of the father is light. No darkness is in him.

The darkness of sin can never and will never be found in him. And his character is light. It is his nature.

Whatever attribute that blessed one truly holds and belongs to him, is always eternally true of him. And you and I who are saved and been brought into fellowship with one whose nature is light, no darkness in him at all. And how blessed to realize the fact that such is the nature of our God, light, with no darkness within him at all.

Then you may note, if you look at verse six, and if you look at verse eight, and if you look at verse ten, John uses a repetitive expression, where he says, if we say, if we say, if we say. Now this is not particularly associated only with those who are in fellowship with the father, but John by the Holy Spirit together with his companion apostles, in the days in which he lived before the departure of the apostles from the earth, they were permitted to realize there were false professors in the claims of Christianity. We shall note, particularly in our pursuing studies, how John clearly emphasizes the possibility of a profession that is false, an unreal profession of fellowship with God, that the light betrays as being alive.

And in those days of Gnosticism and Antinomianism, which prevailed even ere John left the scene, before Paul left the scene of earth, and before John and others, and others of the apostles, there were dangers in the profession of the Christian testimony upon the earth. There's none that seems more forceful in the portraying of these false professions than John the apostle of love, it would seem as you study this letter. Now when you look at the sixth verse, you note very particularly that John hits very hard against the heresy of those who would declare, as some do, and as some did in his day, if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.

And it is but the profession of one who claims to be in the Christian testimony, and in fellowship with the father and with his son, that who in life is walking, not in the light, but if you note, walk in darkness, that one lies and does not practice the truth. Now may I say very emphatically, and the next verse will emphasize the truth of it, the true child of God is never out of the place of light, into which God by his spirit in conversion has brought him or her, and that we shall see as we look further on in the chapter. But there are those who say we have fellowship with God, and yet they are walking in darkness.

One thing is very true, and we shall note it carefully in the next verse, that one cannot walk in the place of darkness and in the place of light at the same time. And John very carefully emphasizes three cardinal facts that prove the genuine character of one who is in fellowship with God. In the seventh verse, there are

three particular essential evidences of a true Christian.

I say it earnestly, that man in verse six does not show the evidence of being a true Christian. His walk denies it. We'll find in chapter two again, that John repeats, if we say that we know him, and keep not his commandments, the same is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

John draws a very clear demarcation between reality and unreality in the Christian profession. Beloved, I don't have to say to you, the unreality of the Christian profession is widely known, and widely in evidence today. The contrary light, denying what may be the profession of the lips, and against it John holds the accusation, such a one is lying to state they're in fellowship with God when they walk in darkness.

But then he adds the three-fold evidence of a true Christian, and please note it, in verse seven. First of all, but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light. Now I want you to know what he does not say.

He does not say if we walk according to the light. Please notice, John is emphasizing the place where the grace of the Father is brought us. In that position, in that blessed place, where we are in the light.

What does light mean? John is one of the most unusual writers. He uses particularly four words greater than any other of the writers of the New Testament. He uses the word believe in the sin and in faith more than any other.

He uses the word light more than any other. He uses the word light, l-i-g-h-t, more than another. He uses the word love more than any other writer.

Then what is the meaning of light? Is it not spiritual illumination? Our God is light. In him is no darkness. And when you and I were saved, when we were invited to come to Christ, did we not hear the words of the old hymn saying, come to the light, to shining for thee? Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.

Once I was blind, but now I can see the light of the world, is Jesus. He took us out of the kingdom of darkness. My fellow believer, you are not in the kingdom of darkness.

He brought you and me out of it. And he brought us into the kingdom of his light and the kingdom of his deus sans. Paul writes to the Ephesians, ye are children of light.

He writes to the Thessalonians, we are not children of the night, we are children of the day. And please may I say, the position of a child of God who is the true born again believer, that position is constantly in the place of light. And may I say, you may not always walk according to the light of God's word, but he never drives you out of his light.

He never drives you nor me into the darkness where we were once. In fact that light is still available to meet the need that may be ours if we are out of fellowship with him, for the restoration of that fellowship. Please may I say, this is where we are in him, and through him who loved us.

We live the light, and that is our place in the sight of God and in his family. And what joy it is to recognize the spiritual illumination of our God that opened our once blinded eyes, is still shining upon the child of God as he thus is in that blessed position. What an evidence! We walk in the light as he is in the light.

That's our blessed place before the Father. Not out in the world of darkness, in the Father's light. What a privilege! What an honor and what a joy! Well may we say, God help us to be in the enjoyment of that blessed place where he has brought us.

And then there's a second evidence. As John goes on to say, we have fellowship one with another. Here I believe is the fellowship with the fellow believers.

Fellowship with the members of the family of God. For they who fellowship with God can fellowship, and do fellowship one with another. With other genuine Christians.

And my beloved, what a joy it is to recognize that in that place of light, we find fellowship with others that are in the light. Sometimes there may be strangers in the flesh to us. But there is the evidence of life that one is a Christian.

And you'll find that they're the Lord's. And immediately, there's a tie. There's a bond that enables them to enjoy fellowship.

Let me give you an illustration that happened. A particular brother in Christ with his family was seated in the restaurant. And as he and the children were partaking of their food, another family came in nearby and sat, and ordered their meal.

And then that family, before eating their food, they gave thanks for the food that had been provided. The little fellow in my friend's family saw it. And he hollered out, they're giving thanks for the food.

And sure enough, though they'd never seen each other, they found that there was a bond. A fellowship. They were in the family.

May I emphasize, God help us to realize this. Every born-again Christian is in the family of God. The family is one.

God doesn't divide His family. In only one way, as we shall see, God willing, in our next study, as we come into chapter two. But the family is one.

And everyone who is life is within that family. And the fellowship ranges as God would have us enjoy it as much as possible. We have fellowship one with another.

Then there's the third evidence. And may I say kindly, the third evidence may often be misinterpreted. In the wrong manner.

For the third evidence of a true Christian we find at the end of this seventh verse is this. And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Now may I emphasize the whole verse again, as we did at the beginning of it.

It's not how we walk. It is where we walk. In the life.

In the fellowship that is ours because we're in the family. One with another. But in that same blessed position, we are continually under the efficacious continual cleansing of the blood of Christ.

Please may I say with all earnestness, I do not believe that the apostle is referring to any present condition. Merely. At the end of verse seven.

But to the continuous condition. The continual state that the child of God is forever under the efficacious precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul well wrote to the Hebrews as he wrote in the epistle chapter ten, I believe verse twelve.

He has perfected forever. He has perfected continually them that are sanctified. And where do we get our position of sanctification? On what ground do we have that perfection that is ours forever? Only one ground.

The precious blood of Christ. Like the apostle, well may I say in the Greek text, John really says literally, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from everything. And I like that word everything.

Past, present and future. Name it. Oh beloved.

What a place he brought us. Into the life. Fellowship with one another.

Under the continual efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ. And there is where we walk. And the joy of knowing these are the evidences of a true Christian.

But let's go further. John goes on to say, in great review of those who again profess with a falsity. If we say that we have no sin.

We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Here you have John's review. To even the Gnostic heresy that there was no sin within certain persons who thus claim this.

The claim of perfectionism. Would to God that even today when you find people who say they're perfect, who say they cannot sin, say that they have no sin. I remember many years ago as in a school house in the north I finished a gospel service one Sunday afternoon.

And greeting the people as they left. An old man, about eighty years of age he was, greeted me at the door and I asked him kindly if he was sane. He said yes, I've been sane for forty years.

And I looked at him, but I was much younger, that was about over forty years ago. And I looked at him and said, well you've been sane longer than I have. And then he went on to say and I've got something else too.

I said what's that? He said I have eradication from sin. But before he could let me reply he went on to say brother I wish you'd pray for me. And I felt like saying brother you better pray for me.

Eradication from sin? Beloved we have such claims. And how John very carefully goes on to say, if we say that we have no sin we're not deceiving anyone but ourselves. And the truth is not in us.

Please may I point out something. A beautiful contrast between the first half of this chapter and the last part of it. What we saw this morning was the manifestation of grace.

Remember the words of John as he wrote in chapter one of his gospel? Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And it was grace that brought us into the fellowship with God the Father and with God the Son. That now John is not only emphasizing grace, he's emphasizing truth.

And there cannot, there will not, there must not be grace at the expense of truth. And John very rightly condemns the claim of perfectionism. That one cannot sin.

And the person himself or herself is without deceit. And the truth is not in us. And so we may truly confess as John refers to it, that person is not telling the truth.

Did you ever notice something in the life of Paul? Bless my heart. Did you ever notice Paul's growth in his Christian testimony? Let me quote the words of John the Baptist. When in John 3 verse 30, John the Baptist said of the Lord Jesus, he must increase and I decrease.

And in the life of the beloved apostle Paul, in three particular stages of his life, you see that principle. Christ increasing, Paul decreasing. Let me point them out.

When you read of Paul writing in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he calls himself the least of the apostles. He takes the lowest place amongst the apostles. Then when you go to Ephesians chapter 3, and I believe it's in verse 8, he writes of himself as being less than the least of all saints.

When you come to a later epistle, one of the last he ever wrote, 1 Timothy 1 15, he says this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am sin. And he acknowledges as he grows in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, as he decreases in his own opinion, least of the apostles, less than the least of all saints, last of all chief of sinners. But on the other hand, you'll find the Lord increasing in his character and person before the heart and life of the dear saint.

When he was converted on the Damascus road, there was a light that shone from heaven, the light of the glorified Lord. When he tells of his conversion in chapter 22 of the book of the act, on the castle steps, he says it was a great light. When in chapter 25, he recites this conversion again before King Agrippa, he says, Oh King Agrippa, it was a light exceeding greater than the sun.

And surely we can recognize the more a man and woman grows in grace and the knowledge of the Lord, the more he or she decreases in his and her own personal opinion of themselves. We know there are sins of omission. There can be sins of commission, there can be sins of ignorance, but it is absolutely untrue for anyone to say, as John says, I have no sin.

And that one is but self-deceived and the truth is not in them. But then John touches upon the believer. As you look at verse 9, please, I notice that he touches upon the sins that may come in the lives of the father's children.

Now God willing, John goes on and we shall see in our next message in chapter 2, particularly to deal with what may be sin in the life of a believer. But John here touches upon it, reminding us that the sin in the life of a believer can certainly never break the relationship. Once in the family, always in the family.

No one ever gets unborn. Never. You cannot do it in the natural state.

And you cannot do it in the spiritual state. But if we confess, and one recognizes a strong meaning in the Greek text to that word confess. If we confess our sin, and though there's no change in relationship, we know obviously there is a change in the fellowship with the father.

But when committed, my fellow believer, may I give this emphasis. I know that when we came to him as a sinner, believing, we came with a whole load of our sins and laid them at his feet. But the emphasis, and you find it in John's writing, the emphasis that John has in the gospel according to his name, is for the sinner to believe.

These things were written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing, ye might have life through his name. And on the ground of faith, believing, John emphasizes life

eternal will be the issue for those who believe on the Savior.

There is a strong implication in this Greek word, that in the life of a believer when sin may come, and it should be certainly an exception, when thus it appears that faith is to confess it, and that confession implies. Please may I go further this way. Look, when we were saved, could you confess all your sins to the Lord? I recall many years ago as I led a dear man to the Lord in a schoolhouse in the north again, and he came to me at the close of the meeting after many weeks of preaching and deep conviction of soul.

He said, Mr. Bramall, I want my big sins and I want my little sins all forgiven. I said, good. And I said, I'll stay with you no matter how long it takes.

But it didn't take too long, he meant it. But is he not, he told God he wanted all of his sins forgiven. He couldn't confess all that they were and name them one by one.

But my fellow believer, may I say to you, as well as to my own heart and conscience, when it comes to broken fellowship with the Father, name it, confess it, call it what the, name it what the Father would name it, and agree to how the Father feels regarding it. And thus be, as we should do, manifesting our hatred for what we have done. You think of David's penitent confession in chapter 51 of the psalm, against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

And oh, what a penitent confession it was. He had not lost his salvation, but he lost the joy of it, as he prayed for the restoration of his joy. But my fellow believer, you and I, if we confess, and I want you to notice something particularly, between verse 8 and 9. In verse 8 John touches upon the nature of sin.

In verse 9 he touches upon the acts of sin. There's a difference between sin, and sin. Sin is that nature which we all possess.

Sins are what we have done. And please may I say, may I repeat it, I need it for my conscience, and I'm sure you may too. When specific sins come into our lives as God's children, let us as quickly as possible, tell the Father, confess what it was that led us out of fellowship, that we might be restored.

He is faithful, he is just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we shall see how he does it as we come into the second chapter. But oh the faithfulness of the Father, to thus effect the restoration. And may I state, the believer's attitude towards sin is involved in the word confess.

My attitude towards sin, beloved, there is no question of doubt, as John in the context has told us where we are in life. Our Father is light, in him is no darkness at all. And do you know what John is seeking to do? He's seeking to implant in our hearts and consciences the same hatred for sin that is in the heart of the Father, towards us.

I remember many years ago, many years past, in years past, when dear old brother Alfred Loiseau in Baltimore was alive, I visited many times in his home. And there are many occasions that we sat at the table, breakfast table, perhaps from breakfast almost to noontime, meditating together and speaking together on the things of God. I recall one time we were speaking concerning the chastening hand of God upon his children.

And I never will forget one statement he made so emphatically to me. He said, brother Bramhall, he said, there are some things I am scared to do. He said, I am afraid my father, and I thank God for an attitude like that.

My beloved, whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth everyone whom he receiveth. And the maintaining of fellowship in that joy that should be ours requires, let there be no sin, none confessed between us and the Father. For surely it breaks the fellowship, though it will never break the relationship.

But the fellowship will be restored when the compassion is made, and the forgiveness will be obtained, and the cleansing from that specific sin in the Father's sight. Then John deals particularly in the last verse with what I would say is ultra-perfectionism, perfectionism with a vengeance. In verse eight, it may be a Christian who says, I have no sin within me.

But in verse ten, here is a person that says, I've never sinned. You see, can there be such? Oh yes, John meant them in his days. You see, how could it ever be? May I state, may I bring you right up to date? Not only going back to John's day, you and I are seeing people and hearing of people daily, who will not, who do not, and cannot recognize what sin is.

And they may speak of committing adultery and other life-sentient sins, and they will say it's not sin. That is the prevailing conditions of today. Murder is not seen as murder.

Drug addiction is not seen as drug addiction that is contrary, as revealed in his word, and of the devil. Fornication is not seen as being contrary to the will of God for human life. And theft and perjury are not sin.

And John had even in his day, those who said sin was not sin. And beloved, their piling up today has never before in the whole world. And men and women are living in sin today as never before, and perhaps not unlike the days of Sodom and Gomorrah in a worldwide situation.

And denied with sinning, contrary to the word of God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And any such that declares this, says, make God a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Please may I again say, John balances grace and truth. And the true child of God is to recognize that the grace of God has brought him and her into fellowship with the Father, with his Son, Jesus Christ. And they should, and we should, walk according and live according to the truth that balances grace.

Grace doesn't mean that I can live any way I wish, God ever forbid. But how John clearly places the responsibility. You're a child of the Father, walk in the life into which he's brought you.

Fellowship as children of the Father, one with another. Walk in the consciousness, the blood of Jesus Christ and his continual efficacy, covers you, protects you, shields you, for time and for eternity. And these truths are given, that you and I may be in the kind of children the Father wants.

I'm sure some of us may remember, as I do in my young days, when perhaps going out evening after evening, wherever my brother, myself may have been going. And one of the last words mother would say, remember whose children you are. My fellow believer, we're all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. With it there comes responsibility, to walk pleasing to the Father above in happy communion and unbroken fellowship. One of the great requirements is, and undoubtedly this, Lord, keep me from breaking fellowship with thee.

There is only one.

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