

# Fellowship 1 John 1

by W.F. Anderson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having fellowship with God and living a life of joy and holiness through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** John 1:1

**Topics:** "Fellowship With God", "Joy In Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells a story about a Shaw and a fireman who become friends and share wise counsel. The speaker then references a sermon by Alexander White on what things we crave. He suggests that if we could send out spies to explore all of heaven and earth, they would come back with a report that assures us of our safety in Christ. The speaker then discusses the reasons why our joy as children of God should be full, focusing on the objective revelation of Jesus Christ and our fellowship with the Father and the Son.

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## Transcript

We have seen with our eyes which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of light. For the light was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal light 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 might 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, cleanses 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. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.

And if any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. I thought that perhaps, just for fifteen minutes each night together, we could consider some very practical thoughts out of John's first epistle. Now don't look alarmed, dear folks.

I remember that it's just a few years ago that we went through John's first epistle together, but there are two considerations that nerve me for another endeavor. The first is that, in reading a certain Christian magazine a few months ago, I came across an article in which the major topic of discussion was, How soon could a preacher repeat a sermon to the same congregation? It was suggested perhaps once every two years. Some suggested once every few months.

But the general consensus of opinion was, amongst those who had more experience in preaching the Word, that a preacher could repeat a sermon in two weeks, and the people would never know the difference. I don't know whether that's the preacher's fault or the hearer's fault, but I well remember on one occasion, visiting in the home of an elder brother, I don't mean an elder in the sense that we have them in 1 Timothy 3, but an older brother, in Florence, and we were discussing the Word that I had in the world. He said, stay and sit with me for a while.

I said, I'm sorry brother, I've got to get on home and back to my study and get to my book. I've got to get something ready, you know, for the weekend. He said, oh, you could preach what you preached last Sunday morning and I wouldn't know the difference.

So I figured we'd go back to 1 John and it won't make too much difference. And then I do trust that in the few years since we've looked at it together, I have learned a little more. I don't know about that, I hope I have.

But we're going to look a little at some practical considerations out of John's first epistle. I'm going to provide this epistle in three sections according to the three main purposes for which it was written. The first purpose you'll find here in the fourth verse.

These things write we unto you that your joy may be full. I'm going to suggest to you that the first four verses were written that our joy might be full. Then verses 5 through chapter 2 and verse 2 were written that we might not sin.

And the rest of the epistle has been written in the language of chapter 5 verse 13 that we might know that we have eternal life. So I'm not suggesting that there's nothing in the rest of the epistle that would make our joy full. Nor am I suggesting there's nothing in the rest of the epistle to keep us from a life of sin.

Nor am I suggesting that only in the latter part of this epistle can we know that we have eternal life. But I think these are the three main outlines of this epistle. These first four verses are written that our joy might be full.

Verses 5 through chapter 2 verse 2 are written that we might not sin. And the rest of the epistle gives us some very practical and experimental ways in which we may know that we are saved. Now unfortunately, there are those who take these very practical things that they might doubt that they are saved.

But John writes them that you and I might know that we are saved. Tonight, as a few moments permit, I want to look at the first two sections, perhaps just the first. That our joy might be full, and secondly, that we might not sin.

Now there are two reasons why our joy ought to be full. Why every one of us who is a child of God tonight ought to be overflowing with joy. The first reason is found in the first two verses of our chapter.

That is the objective revelation of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the second reason is found in verses 3 and 4. Our fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Now consider these just for a moment.

In these first two verses, the apostle John speaks of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the gospel of God. You're aware of the difference between John's gospel and John's first epistle. Let me go over briefly some of the ideas.

In John's gospel, we enter the family of God. In the first epistle, we enjoy the family of God. John's gospel was written that we might believe.

I'm going to suggest to you that John's first epistle was written that we might behave. In John's gospel, we behold the Lamb of God. In John's first epistle, we behold the love of the Father.

John's gospel was written about Christ. John's first epistle was written about the Christian. John's gospel could be epitomized in the Lord saying, I am the light of the world.

The first epistle in his saying, ye are the light of the world. You have an expression in the second chapter that sums up the two books. Which thing was true in him and in you? True in him is John's gospel.

True in you is John's first epistle. Now then, in the first two verses, we have the objective revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh dear Christian, just the fact that Jesus Christ our Lord is, and that he came to earth and lived that perfect life, and we know him, this ought to fill our hearts with joy.

Just as one goes through the gospels and traces the perfections of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, one cannot help but fall at his feet in overwhelming joy and gratitude that the Lord Jesus Christ is. In one of his startling ways of putting things, Alexander White in a sermon, well Alexander White, by the way, was the same Presbyterian preacher of Scotland. You always connect St. George's Church of Edinburgh, Scotland with Alexander White.

One of the most eloquent of preachers, and he had a very unique way of phrasing things. He has a sermon on what things do you crave. And in that sermon, in order to determine what you think of the Lord Jesus, he suggests this.

That as Israel sent out twelve spies to spy out the promised land before they went in, you send out spies if you could, just in your imagination now, and suppose these spies could scour all of heaven and earth, suppose they could go to the uttermost extremities of the universe of God, suppose there was no corner nook or cranny into which they did not go, in all that God is, in all that God has created, and they came back to you tonight with this report, there is no such person as Jesus Christ, there never was and there never will be. Now what would be your reaction to such a message as that? Would you congratulate those men and invite them in to eat and drink with you and consider this the happiest day you would ever spend when you discovered there is no such person as Jesus Christ? Would you be glad to be rid of the idea of such a person, that you would never have to face him, you would never have to answer to him? Or would this night that those spies brought back that report be the darkest one in all the history of your existence? Would it be that you could find no reason for living? Would it be that your soul would be plunged into the depths of despair by the news that there is no more Jesus Christ? What is your reaction to this individual? And I'm sure every true child of God tonight has his heart aglow with the fact that he knows him! And John

says, I'm telling you that this life which was with the Father has been manifested. We've seen him, we've looked upon him, we've handled him, we've heard him, and now I'm telling you about him.

And he's a wonderful Savior. Just the fact that there is such a person as the Lord Jesus Christ ought to fill our hearts with joy. He's called the Word of Life.

Our Lord Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Now God has spoken. God who has a hundred times and in diverse manners taken time fast unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken to us in silence.

But I love what the Lord Jesus said. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. And in A.P. Gibbs' classic illustration, a young man who was always talking about automobiles has a garage for a heart.

Whatever comes out of your mouth is the abundance. And the word abundance is the word used, is it in Mark chapter 8 when the Lord was feeding the multitude? And it's the fragments that were left over. That's the word abundance.

It's the heart filled up and then what's left over, that's what comes out. God has spoken. The Lord Jesus is the Word.

Out of the abundance of God's heart, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has declared to us the heart of God. For it's out of the abundance of the heart.

I'm glad he didn't say out of the abundance of the intellect. Or out of the abundance of knowledge, but out of the abundance of the heart. And this blessed one who is the revelation of the heart of God hath brought you and me who know him right to that very heart.

And I say the fact that Jesus Christ is, should fill our hearts with joy. It's John designed that it should. Oh go through the gospels my friend, you cannot read them too much.

Contemplate the magnificence of his humility. The greatness of his love. The uniqueness of his character.

Gaze on him until your soul is filled with him. Until you could answer the question what is thy beloved more than another beloved. This John says, I'm writing to you that your joy might be full.

Now the second thing that offers to our hearts with joy is that our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. John says, I'm writing that you may have fellowship with us. Well that's a great blessing isn't it? I don't know any happier association on earth than the people of God.

That he also may have fellowship with us. Isn't it grand to be in the family of God? No strangers in that family. Wherever you go and you meet a true child of God, there's that bond of kinship and heart is open to heart.

My it is a thrill. Some of you who like myself have spent some time in the service and perhaps in some barren wilderness spiritually when you ran across a fellow believer. Wasn't it a wonderful experience? I remember being in a certain place on vacation and I was, as a youngster I didn't think anybody was going to be in heaven but us.

And I sort of carried that notion with me into the service that I had been in a very barren place aboard a small ship and out to sea for some time. And I came back to a certain base and found a few like-minded Christians and we had a little Bible class once a week. And after three and a half years in the service for the first time I met a Christian chaplain.

I could have embraced that man and kissed him. He was just passing through and he came into our little Bible class and there we were together over the Word of God. John says, Oh doesn't that make your heart thrill with joy that you may have fellowship with us? With us.

You know it's going to be a grand thing when we get to go and all the family of God is there. I've got a lot of brothers and sisters I haven't met yet that I'm sure anxious to see. Ah but there's something even better than that.

John says, Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus. Now my dear Christian friend if that doesn't fill your heart with joy tonight I don't know what will. But you and I have the privilege of walking in fellowship with the living God and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Enoch walks with God and you and I may have the same thing written as our epitaph if the Lord be not come before we meet His light. Our fellowship, our communion, our joint sharing is with the Father and with His Son. We sit down at the same table.

The table of Israel was connected with the peace offering as you all know. And in that peace offering there was part of the sacrifice offered up to God. Part went to the officiating priest.

Part went to the Levitical tribe of family. Part was kept by the Israelites. Oh you see they were all in fellowship.

Grand things. And the highest, sometimes the highest expression of fellowship is sitting at one's table. Good thing isn't it.

Well here I am at the same table with the Father and His Son. You find it in 1 Corinthians 10, the Lord's table. My right to be there is His precious blood and I feed on Himself.

Tomorrow night Lord willing we shall take up three incentives to holy living. Three things were written that we might not exceed and three things that will prevent holy living. The justice of the church.

Years ago the Persians had a ruler of whom they spoke highly of. Long years after his death he was called the Shaw Abbot. He had that habit that so many rulers have had of liking to disguise himself and making his way amongst the common people of his realm mingling with them just to get to know them.

And one day dressed as a commoner he went down the street and entered into a doorway and down a narrow flight of stairs into the basement of a building where the fireman was sitting on a pile of coal tending the furnace that heated the building. And the Shaw sat down with him and they conversed together. And at mealtime the fireman broke out his black bread and his water and he shared his meal with his visitors.

And when the Shaw left he was determined to come back because he was much touched by the poverty and the difficulties of this man whom he had met. Day by day the Shaw returned and as their friendship grew this poor common fireman learned to unfold his heart to this unknown friend of his from whom he

received such wise counsel and good advice. And after this had gone on for a long time the Shaw said I think today I'll let this man know who I am and then we'll see what he asks for.

And so this day when the Shaw descended the long flight of stairs down into the basement and sat down on the coal pile with the poor fireman and as they talked together the Shaw turned to the fireman and said do you know who I am? Why no said the fireman only that you have become a very dear friend. Only that I have enjoyed your company day by day but I don't know who you are. Well said his ruler I'm your Shaw.

I am Shaw F. Taken aback the fireman was startled. Now said the Shaw I have many friends. I have given them many gifts.

Now you ask me what I shall give you. And that fireman looked at the Shaw. He said sir you may have given much wealth to many others in this country but to me you have given the greatest gift of all.

You have given yourself and I could ask for nothing more. That's what the Lord Jesus has done. He has given us himself.

And our fellowship is with the father and with his son Jesus Christ. And these things write I unto you that your joy might be filled.

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