

OpenTheo

1 John 1



1 John - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg explores the first chapter of 1 John, which emphasizes the importance of knowing God and having a relationship with him. He notes that salvation is not only about being saved from sin, but also about experiencing a transformed life. Gregg also highlights John's use of the word "manifested" to describe how God's love is made known to us through his son, Jesus. The chapter also touches on the concept of confessing Jesus as the Son of God and loving one another as a sign of our relationship with God.

Transcript

Alright, we're turning to 1 John. And last night we had an introduction to the book. And tonight we have chapter 1, which is the shortest chapter in the book.

That doesn't mean there isn't a lot to say about it. There is. But, I thought what we would do at the beginning and before we actually study chapter 1 is read through the whole book.

Now, I happen to know how long it takes to do. It takes 15 minutes because when I was 19 years old, I memorized the book of 1 John. And I used to have to recite it every day so I wouldn't forget it.

And I had to schedule 15 minutes to do it. And I can schedule 15 minutes in this class for us to go through it. But I would like us to be looking for some specific things as we read through it.

There is obviously, it was written in order to be read in a single setting. Most epistles were. They weren't intended generally to be studied as we study them where you take verse by verse and really expound on them.

John expected that the church would just have the whole thing read to them and that they would understand it. We have to study it because we don't have some of the same background they had. Some of the vocabulary is not as familiar to us as it was to them.

And so, studying it is a great idea. We need to do that. But reading it through and getting the whole message of the book in a single scan through is definitely something that should be done with every epistle certainly.

And we can do that tonight because the chapter we have to take is a short chapter. And therefore, we can do this at the beginning of our exploration of the book. But what I want you to be looking for is John's, and therefore the first century church's, understanding of what salvation is.

Now, you're going to find him talking about eternal life and that's usually what we think of as salvation anyway. We think of living forever. Generally, we think of going to heaven and living forever after we die.

And that is sometimes all we think about. Sometimes that's the only aspect of salvation that we talk to unbelievers about that we even talk to Christians about. Is that, you know, well, you know, just hang in there and then when you die you'll go to heaven and you'll be saved.

But of course, the Bible teaches that Christians are already saved. Eternal life after we die is simply a continuation of eternal life that we acquired in this life. We start living as soon as we're born again.

When we're born of the Spirit, we have eternal life and that is for the rest of our lives and beyond. So, really, the message about salvation is not strictly speaking about what happens after you die. It has to do with what happens now and later.

What happens now continues into the eternal future, but it's supposed to begin here and it's supposed to look like something. When a person is saved, they're supposed to be different than a person who is not saved. But in what ways? What privileges are there? You know, some people have speculated that if there's people out there who the gospel never reaches in their lifetime, that God might, you know, in the judgment day take into consideration their ignorance and judge them according to the light they had.

And in some cases, maybe he'd even show mercy to them because they didn't have opportunity to hear the gospel, but they responded to whatever light God gave them. No one knows for sure if this is how God deals with those who've never heard, but it's a very common view among evangelicals. And I think perhaps a reasonable view.

I'm not able to take a stand one way or the other where the Bible is silent, but it's not unlike God to be fair. It's not unlike God to be merciful. And Jesus, if he did, in fact, die for the whole world, he certainly has the right to forgive anyone he wants to, even if they haven't had the advantage of hearing from him.

But what I'm about to say about that is that that only takes into consideration how God may deal with them at the judgment and how life, how their eternity may end up. But

what about this life? Some people say, well, if people could maybe possibly be saved without even hearing the gospel, why should I stick my neck out and go overseas and be a missionary and, you know, put my life on the line and live in hardship and give up the comforts of this country and so forth to reach people for Christ? Why should I even go evangelize people at all? In their ignorance, they may search for him and find him if this is so. So what difference does it make? And sometimes they say even, you know, if I preach to them, they might reject it.

And if I don't preach to them, maybe they'll, you know, maybe they'll seek God and find him. But if they hear the gospel preached and rejected, then they're culpable. So better off not teaching them.

But if that's the way God thought about things, he wouldn't have told us to go and preach the gospel to every creature and to make disciples of all nations. And I'm not sure what God is going to do about those who have never heard. But I know this.

Even if he shows mercy at the time of judgment to some who have never heard, those who have never heard will have lived their lives without salvation. They may experience belated salvation after they die, but God intends for them to be saved now. And saved now means their life is going to be different.

For one thing, they're going to live for his glory. That's what's missing after all in the sinful world. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We're supposed to be living for his glory. We're not supposed to be concerned merely about getting by, you know, past the judgment by the skin of our teeth, just barely making it through because God happened to be merciful to us at the time of the judgment. God wants something from his people now.

It says in Titus that Jesus died for us, that he might redeem us from every unlawful deed and acquire for himself a people who are zealous for good works. This is what God wants now from us. If people are not evangelized, they won't turn to God and know Jesus and be delivered from their sins and have power over the demonic forces and, you know, live for his glory and fulfill a purpose in his body and express the gifts that he's given them to edify the body and to reach the world.

In other words, if people don't hear about Jesus, they won't have any of those aspects of salvation. Even if we would imagine that they might possibly not go to hell when they die, we know that before they die, they will miss out on what the Bible calls salvation. Salvation in the Bible is not just about doing something or getting something when you die.

It's about being rescued from your aimless, sinful life, restored to God and restored to the proper relationship with God in which you can fulfill the purpose he had for you when

he made you in the first place, which is in this life. He's got something for each of us to do. And if we fail in that, it may be some consolation that a person goes to heaven instead of hell.

In fact, it'd be a great consolation. But that's only because we're thinking about us and those people. God still has missed out on what he wanted from them.

Salvation is for God. The Bible speaks of it as God's salvation. It's his salvation.

He owns it and he saves us for himself. Now, when John writes about salvation, he uses a number of... he gives away a lot of the things that he considers to be part of salvation. For example, as we read through 1 John, I want you to note how he speaks about salvation as fellowship with God.

Now, not after he died, but now, fellowship with God. God wants fellowship with us. That's part of being saved.

It has to do with being forgiven and cleansed of sin. We're going to see that's an aspect of salvation, cleansed of our sinful life and therefore living a righteous life. Knowing God in a relationship.

John's going to talk about those who know God and those who don't know God. Overcoming Satan and overcoming the world is mentioned. Part of salvation is that we have the ability to overcome the devil in our lives and to overcome the negative, corrupting influences of the world.

Abiding in Christ is one of the ways that John speaks about salvation in this book. And God abiding in us. Us abiding in Christ and God abiding in us are both terms that John uses for salvation.

Having eternal life frequently is mentioned as part of salvation and not getting it when you die, but having it now. If you have it now, you'll still have it after you die, of course. But it's not focused on after you die.

It's focused on now, coming from death into life. He speaks of that. Being born of God.

John uses this term a number of times. That we are born of God. That is, we have a new family relationship with God.

Here and now. He speaks about being taught by God's spirit. Certainly one of the advantages of our salvation is that the spirit of God dwells in us.

He mentions that numerous times and teaches us, leads us into all truth. We have this learning experience from the inward teaching of God's Holy Spirit given to us. These are some of the advantages or the features of salvation as John and the early Christians understood it.

Most of those have to do with a change in our life now. And what God intends for his people to have. And salvation is, in fact, God rescuing for himself people back into this kind of a relationship.

Back into these particular features of what the Bible refers to as salvation. It's not just about going to heaven. It's about much more.

And you'll see that John takes that for granted. The early Christians knew that. They weren't American evangelicals.

They were first century Christians. And as such, they didn't have the trappings and the mistakes and so forth that have come in over the past 2,000 years into much of the popular teaching. And what I have you do as we read the book is keep your eyes and ears open for the New Testament concept of what all is involved in salvation.

John says, And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 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 him 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 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 I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Now by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He who says I know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.

By this we know that we are in him. He who says he abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now.

He who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the father.

I have written to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the wicked one. Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world is passing away, and the lusts of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever. Little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many Antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar? But he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

He is Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he has promised us, eternal life.

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in him.

And now, little children, abide in him, that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God.

Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know him. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin.

Whoever abides in him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen him nor known him. Little children, let no one deceive you.

He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brothers were righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, and does not, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, for if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God, and whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. Now he who keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him.

And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God.

He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has seen God at any time.

If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world, whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us.

If someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother also. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

And everyone who loves him who begot, also loves him who is begotten by him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

For there are three who bear witness in heaven. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. And these three are one.

And there are three that bear witness on earth. The Spirit, the water, and the blood. And these three agree as one.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness of God which is testified of his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

He who does not believe God has made him a liar. Because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son. And this is the testimony that God has given to us.

Eternal life. And this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life.

He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Now this is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask and he will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death.

I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin. And there is a sin not leading to death.

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin. But he who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him. We know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true and we are in him who is true in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Amen. We see the whole book in a span. And it is really interesting to read a whole book without a break and follow the train of thought.

As I said in our introduction last night, we saw that there are a number of ways in which John says we know that we are truly Christians. He said there are four things. We know because we believe and confess the truth about Jesus.

We know because we keep his commandments and live a righteous life. We know because we love one another. We know because he has given us of his Spirit.

These are the four things that are the fourfold test of genuine Christian life. Genuine conversion. There are many people who have false conversions and you can tell because they lack in one or more of these areas.

If you wonder if you are really saved, you can test yourself by those things. But John assumes that his readers do pass all these tests. He assumes these things are true of them.

It is interesting too because he is not writing to some elite group of saintly Christians. He is just writing to general Christians. But in the first century, this was a given.

Christians were expected to have correct doctrine, correct behavior, to have love for one another, and to have the Spirit of Christ manifest in their lives. And these things were so, obviously. John would not have said so if he did not think they were true.

And they are no less true today of those who are, of course, true Christians. And so, we now know how to identify ourselves as either Christians or not genuinely by those tests. Now, I am sure that there were a number of passages, especially in chapter 5 about the sin unto death, and the Spirit and the water and the blood, and those who are born of God do not sin, and so forth.

I know these are hard passages. Some of them harder than others. And we will deal with them as we come to them.

We are going to go chapter by chapter through the book. And, as I said, we have a very short chapter before us today. Chapter 1, only 10 verses.

The second chapter is two and a half times as long. So, I do not know why the chapters were divided up this way. John did not do it.

This was done much later by editors who divided the biblical books into chapters and verses. But that was a very disparate division in this particular case. Now, let us look at chapter 1, and as we come to the other chapters in successive evenings, we will talk about those difficult passages that you run across in each of the chapters.

Chapter 1, that which was from the beginning. Now, what is he talking about? Well, at the end of that verse, he refers to it as the word of life. Now, the word is a term that John used in his gospel.

In fact, he opened his gospel by saying, in the beginning was the word. In this letter from the same author, he opens with reference to the beginning and to the word also. The word of life was from the beginning, was present from the beginning.

Here he calls him the word of life. In John's gospel, he says, in the beginning was the word, and he says, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. So, he says in John chapter 1. So, he is not talking about something different.

He talks about light. In this chapter, he talks about the word of life. These are terms he uses also in the opening chapter in the prologue of John's gospel.

So, we've got the same author talking about the same things. The difference is that in his gospel, he is writing the story of Jesus to inspire faith in unbelievers so that they might come to eternal life, he said. In this book, he is writing to Christians, and he is applying many of the same truths that were in his gospel to their experience as Christians.

Now, he is saying that the information about Jesus or this phenomenon of the word, the word of life, who is identified also with eternal life in verse 2, where he says in chapter, 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 was manifested to us. He is talking about Jesus is that eternal life. Later on in chapter 5, he says this is the message, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life. Christ is eternal life.

Eternal life is not some kind of a separate gift that if you do sufficient pleasing things to God, he can hand you that gift separate from Jesus. The gift is the life is in his Son. You can't have the life without having his Son.

You have to be in Christ to share with him in eternal life. This is why the idea that some people have has got to be certainly false, that if you come to Christ at some point in your life and later walk away from Christ, you still have your eternal life with you. How could you still have eternal life when you leave him in whom the eternal life resides? What John is saying is that Jesus is eternal life.

Before he came to earth, he existed in God as the word of life. Now, by the way, the word word, logos in the Greek, when coupled in this way with life, the word of life, probably means the word that carries life in it. The receiving of that word is the receiving of the life.

The characteristic of that word is it is a living word, and you receive that word, you receive that life. And that word became flesh and dwelt among us, John 1.14 says. But here he says that life was manifested.

You noticed probably, at least I did, you may have noticed too, as we read through 1 John, the word manifest and manifested is frequently used all kinds of times in different connections. It seems to be one of John's favorite words in this epistle, manifested. What manifested means is revealed, something that already existed undisclosed, has been disclosed.

Something that was invisibly a real phenomenon, but not observed, has been made observable, has been manifested to us. And so he's saying that Jesus, who existed from the beginning, has at some time later than the beginning, more recently in our own time, been manifested to us, he says. Now, he's very emphatic about the fullness of his own experience and contact with this manifestation of which he's speaking is Jesus, of course.

Jesus born on earth is this word made flesh, is this eternal life manifested in a human specimen. And he clarifies that this is not an apparition that he saw. Jesus didn't come down as a ghost or an angel.

He came down as a real, solid, physical being. And this is important because, as I said before in our introduction, John is no doubt trying to counteract the influence of the Gnostic heresy, which denied that Jesus was physical. And especially the Dostatist branch of Gnosticism said that Jesus was just a phantom.

He wasn't really material. Well, John is very upset about Gnosticism and seems to come against it in many of his statements in this epistle. And when he says in verse one, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and we've even touched him, our hands have handled him, this is what we're talking about.

We're talking about tangible, visible, audible. And we've got three of our senses involved here. And he could have probably said, and we smelled him too, because I'm sure they did.

Because he was a man, and he was a Middle Eastern person who probably didn't have a lot of baths and lived in the heat and so forth. We don't often think of Jesus as having body odor or ever having to go to the bathroom or any of those things, but he was a human being. And that's the very thing that John's saying.

He was much more down to earth than you think. He's not some ethereal deity, angel type creature. He was right down here, one of us, living in the heat, in the dusty roads, and we experienced all that we experience with anybody we did with him.

We touched him, we know he's physical. We heard him, we saw him. Our senses took in this manifestation of the life of God in a human being as we take in any other visible physical phenomena.

And he says there in verse 2, as I read earlier, the life was manifested. We have seen and bear witness and declare to you. So it's not just something we saw, but we're here to

pass on that information to you.

We're declaring to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. So in John 1, 1, it says the word was with God and the word was God. Well, he says the word, the eternal life was with the Father.

He was with God, as he said in John 1, 1. He's got a lot of the same ideas that he opened his gospel with here informing these thoughts that he's giving to these Christians. Now, he said, that which we have seen and heard, and he's, of course, emphasized that in the first two verses. Now he says, that thing I've been talking about that's been manifested and we saw and heard, we now declare to you.

Why? Why did he write this? He tells us why he writes this. Why are you declaring this to these people at this time, in this way, in this letter? He says, because I want you to have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

And these things we write to you so that your joy may be full. Now, okay, fellowship with God actually says fellowship with us and our fellowship was with God. So when you're, what does fellowship mean? The word is koinonia in the Greek.

It means a sharing in common with something. Koinonia, which is sometimes translated communion, sometimes translated fellowship. It has to do with something shared between parties in common.

In fact, the fellowship meal that we take communion is the word koinonia. We're sharing together in the body and the blood of Jesus in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Paul says the bread of blessing that we break, is it not the communion, the koinonia of the body of Christ? The cup which we bless, is it not the communion, the koinonia of the blood of Christ? He's saying we all share in this as one body. We have this in common.

There's these privileges that really, they're just, all of us share them equally. And he says, the reason I'm writing to you is so that you can have this sharing with us because our sharing is with the Father and with Jesus. So we're in fellowship with God himself.

We have a relationship and we share in his life and we want you to be involved in that. And you are, he writes to them as Christians, but he says, we declared this to you so that you could participate in this with us. With what? This participation in God.

This fellowship with God, this koinonia with God and with Jesus. And he said, I write these things so that your joy may be full. Certainly he assumes that fellowship with God then is the occasion of fullness of joy.

In the 16th Psalm, David said in Psalm 16, in your presence is fullness of joy. Speaking to God. In your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

You know, the devil tries to persuade people not to come to Christ because they'll have to give up all the fun. They'll have to give up all their pleasures, all their joy. And I suppose, in some respects, there's some truth in that.

Some of the things they are finding pleasure in are contrary to a walk with God and therefore following Jesus is going to be walking away from those things. And it scares people a great deal because they've learned to depend on those joys and those pleasures for their, to make life worth living. And yet so many people have testified that those who have all these pleasures, they're still not fulfilled.

I mean, who has these things more than the rich and the powerful? Who has these things more than movie stars who are loved and admired and recognized by everybody and have almost limitless money and parties and pleasures and all the things the world wants and yet we read of them, they can't make their relationships work, they can't keep a marriage together, they're, you know, they don't look good without makeup, there's the tabloid show, which isn't an important point, but the point is that they aren't, you don't really get the impression they're happy people. You see them getting frustrated and angry and divorcing all the time and jumping from bed to bed. They obviously are seeking something that they haven't found yet or else they wouldn't be so restless.

And frankly, the body of Christ, the Church is filled with people who've come out of those lifestyles and who testified, you know, what I had there in the world, all that I thought was fun, boy, was it cheap, boy, was it tawdry, boy, was it unsatisfying. I remember, although I never actually used drugs, I look like somebody who used to use drugs, but I actually never did. I was a Baptist youth leader when I was a young teenager and I've been in the ministry since I was 16, so I never got a chance to use drugs.

Thank God I never was interested, but all my friends did. All my friends used drugs and all the Christians I associated with in the early 70s had used drugs. Some of them had tried many, many varieties of drugs and used a great deal of them.

And I had many friends, I heard their testimonies on many occasions, they say, you know, the most pleasure I ever had in any experience with drugs was so much less than my worst day as a Christian because you see, people look to the world for their pleasures because they lack God as the source of pleasure. There's alienation from God. Our sins have separated us from God and we don't know the pleasures that are in His right hand.

We don't know the fullness of joy that is in His presence. We've been alienated by our sins and therefore we've had to make do with whatever's available for sinners to do to try to find some consolation in this loneliness of alienation from God and from other people. And so, a lot of people are afraid to give up those pleasures and those joys that they've leaned on, that they've sought.

In many cases, they can't really claim that they found total satisfaction in them, but they

don't dare stop the pursuit because that's where they think it's going to be found. And when people just give that up and come fully to Jesus Christ and come back into that relationship with God that human beings were designed to have, they find the missing component, the missing puzzle piece is there and they find, wow, God is exciting. How do people live without God? How do people find any happiness without God? I've never been able to know because I've, frankly, I have to say I've known God since I was young, so I've never looked for happiness elsewhere.

I've been satisfied with God. But I'll tell you, when I see people who don't have God and see them, you know, striving after whatever, more money, more pleasure, whatever it is they're looking for, more popularity, I think, wow, I truly feel, I mean, I genuinely feel sorry for them. I don't feel superior at all.

I just feel like, wow, I'm so glad I'm not involved in that pursuit they're in because it doesn't look promising. And John said, I want you to have fellowship with us because we have fellowship with God and therefore if you have fellowship with us, you will be having fellowship with God too because he's with us. We're going to be, we'll all share in this enjoyment of God and I do this so that your joy can be full again, so that you can have the fullness of joy that comes with living in the presence of God and knowing his presence in your life.

This fellowship with God is a day-by-day communion. This is like you have with friends. Communication, sharing heart to heart, mutual empathy.

This is what you have in a relationship with somebody with whom you're intimate and that's what John says, God wants us to have that intimacy with him and he says, I'm writing this because I want you to have that. I don't want you to have less than that. I want you to know that fullness of joy that comes with this kind of fellowship with God.

And he says in verse five, 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 him and then we are back to the subject of fellowship with God. If we claim that we have fellowship with him but we're walking in darkness, we're lying.

We don't have fellowship with him. You can't have fellowship with him in darkness. Why? Because he's not there.

God is light. There's no darkness in him at all and if you're in the darkness, you're somewhere else than where he is. You're not having fellowship with him.

The only place you're going to have fellowship with God is where he is, in the light. You have to walk in the light to have fellowship with him. So if a person says, I have fellowship with God but they're not walking in the light, well, they're lying or greatly mistaken because it is not true that they are fellowshiping with him anywhere else than

walking in the light.

Verse seven, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light. See, you got to be where he is if you're going to fellowship with him. We have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin.

Now that line, we have fellowship one with another is usually taken out of context so that people read it and they think it means you and I have fellowship with each other. And that is true, but that's not what John's talking about. The subject matter is fellowship with God.

If you say you have fellowship with God but you're in the darkness, you don't. If you walk in the light, then we, that is I and God, have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. He's not talking in this particular place about the kind of fellowship you and I have with each other as Christians, but the kind of fellowship we, God and I have, God and you have, if we're walking in the light, this fellowship with God is intact.

If we walk in the darkness, it is not intact. Now, obviously this raises the question, what does it mean to walk in the light and to walk in darkness? If I say I have fellowship with God and I'm walking in darkness, I'm lying, but how do I know what walking in darkness looks like? What is walking in darkness? Well, there is one way in which John himself identifies what it looks like to walk in light and to walk in darkness, and that's in chapter 2, verses 10 and 11. In 1 John 2, 10, he says, he who loves his brother abides in the light and there's no cause of stumbling in him, but he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he's going because that darkness has blinded his eyes.

So, certainly walking in the light looks like loving your brother. Walking in darkness looks like not loving your brother. Love is therefore the main characteristic of somebody who's walking in the light.

But why is that called walking in the light? Why don't they just call it walking in love? And after all, the term walking in love is a biblical phrase. Paul uses it in Ephesians 5, 2. He says, walk in love. Ephesians 5, 2. Why doesn't John just say walk in love? Why does he speak of it as walking in the light? Because love is the result of walking in the light.

I think that's what John is saying. It's not what light is. Light and love are not the same thing.

But when you walk in the light, the result is you love people. If you don't walk in the light, the result is you don't love them. So what then is light? What is the reference here to? Now, I think we get our answer from John himself if we turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 3, because this very subject comes up in John, chapter 3, and I think we have in

it somewhat more of an explanation or something that clarifies what it is he's referring to.

Now, in the Gospels, in the Greek, we don't have punctuation. That means we don't have quotation marks in the Greek New Testament, and quotation marks in our English translations reflect what the translators think should be in quotation marks. Now, in the New King James, which I'm using, this section is in quotation marks and is represented as a continuation of Jesus' words to Nicodemus.

The earlier portion of chapter 3, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. Nicodemus talks back with him, but Jesus then goes off on a final monologue, and where that monologue ends, we don't know for sure because the Greek doesn't have quotation marks. It's clear that the translators chose to end Jesus' remarks at the end of verse 21 because that's where the closed quote is put in by them.

My own thought is that probably the closed quote belongs at the end of verse 15, but it's not very important. If I'm correct, then verses 16 through 21 are the commentary of the author, John, on what Jesus has been saying. John does this in his Gospel quite frequently.

He'll quote Jesus, and then he'll have his own commentary and explanation of what Jesus meant and what the implications are. It's neither here nor there whether I'm correct. It's just an observation.

The translators of the New King James have made this statement something Jesus is saying. I'm of the opinion it's something the author, John, is saying, but in either case, it's scripture, so it doesn't really matter which voice it came from. And it says in verse 19 through 21 of John 3, and this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. Now, basically here, light is essentially exposure.

Light is visibility. Walking in the light is living your life transparently, basically. Living your life not trying to hide what you're doing from other people.

People who are condemned, Jesus said, are those who, although the light has come to them, they have hated the light, they've loved the darkness because their deeds being evil, they're embarrassed of them and they just assume not to have the world know about them. If you find yourself not wanting people to find out what you did yesterday or last night or any time recently or what you do on a regular basis, then you're probably walking in darkness because your deeds are evil. You don't want to bring them to the

light.

You don't want them to be exposed. It's embarrassing. But the person who is walking in truth, the person who is doing deeds that are done in God, John said, that person comes to the light.

They're glad to have their deeds exposed because there's nothing to be ashamed of and they're letting their light shine before men, as Jesus said to do in the Sermon on the Mount. So we see here that coming to the light, dwelling in the light and so forth, these kinds of expressions, John used the term walking in the light and abiding in the light in 1 John. This means living and staying and operating in the realm where you've got nothing to hide, basically, where you're not trying to represent yourself differently than you are.

You're not trying to polish your image so that people think you're something you're not, that you're transparent, in other words. Now, people who are embarrassed of their actions, Jesus said they hide. They go into the darkness.

They don't want people to know and see what they're doing. Now, walking in light and walking in darkness, then, are essentially expounded on in 1 John 1, verses 8-10, which is the remainder of this chapter. I want to still say a few more things about verses 6-7, but if you look ahead at 8-10, he says, 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 his. This is the difference between walking in light and walking in darkness.

If you say you haven't sinned, you're hiding something, because you have sinned. You're not fooling God. God himself said all have sinned, and so you're calling him a liar if you say you haven't sinned.

Why not just be honest about it? If we confess our sins, which is walking in the light, not hiding what we really are, not hiding our weaknesses, but being honest and truthful about them and transparent with them. If we confess our sins, well, there's mercy to be had from that, but if we try to conceal our sins, then we're not fooling God, we're not really fooling people as much as we think we are. Walking in the light, then, is being very honest about our failures, the very things we would most like to conceal, that we most like people not to know about, the things that sully our image publicly or in the eyes of people that we'd rather impress.

Religious people would be more impressed if they don't know about how sinful we are privately, and yet to be open, to be humble, to be forthright about our weaknesses, this is what walking in the light involves. Confessing our sins, rather than saying we don't have sin or that we haven't sinned. Notice how much there is in verses 6, 8, 9, and 10,

this if we say, if we say, verse 6, that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we're lying.

And, in verse 8, if we say that we have no sin, we're also lying to ourselves, we're deceiving ourselves. The truth is not in us. And, if we say in verse 10 that we have not sinned, we're making God a liar.

So, there's certain things that if we say them, although we don't say them with the intention of being liars, he's saying these things are untrue. You can't say these things honestly. You can't say you have fellowship with God when you're hiding stuff, when you're walking in darkness, trying to conceal your behavior from the side of God and man.

Why would you want to do that anyway? Unless you're doing something you're ashamed of. And, if you're doing something you're ashamed of, then you're not fellowship with God. Because, when you walk with God, you have to walk with him and be righteous.

So, you're not, never going to be ashamed of being righteous. You might be humble about it, not want to go shouting from the rooftops all the good deeds you've done, but you're not going to be ashamed of people finding out. So, he says in verse 6, if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and we do not practice the truth.

Because, he who is light and in him is no darkness at all, as it says in verse 5, cannot be encountered in the dark, but only in the light. Honesty and humility are major features of walking in the light. Not lying and not being too proud for people to know the truth about you.

Humility and honesty, very, very important features of walking with God. Remember what it says in Micah 6, 8, He showed the old man what is good and what the Lord desires of you or requires of you, that you do justly, that you love mercy and you walk humbly with God. Walking in the light is walking humbly and not seeking to bolster your image in some unrealistic way in order to maintain some kind of prestige or respect in the eyes of men.

So, we need to be walking in the light or else we won't be walking where God is. It says in 2 Corinthians 6, in verse 14, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion has light with darkness? Light and darkness have no fellowship, no communion with each other. If God is light and you're in the dark, you're not fellowshiping with him.

So, obviously, one of the great concerns that John has in chapter 1 of 1 John is with our maintaining fellowship with God. That we have fellowship with the apostles, that is we are one with them in the fellowship they have with Christ, with God, and he wants his

readers to enjoy God like he enjoys God. Now, he actually had a chance to see Jesus and to touch him and to hear him and so forth as he points out in the opening verses.

We don't actually see and touch and smell and hear Jesus like John did, but we can have fellowship with him even as John continued to have fellowship after Jesus ascended and went away. John said, our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. We had a certain kind of contact with him when he was here.

He's gone now, but we still present tense have fellowship with him. Our fellowship is now still with God and we want you to be able to enter into the same kind of connection and fellowship with God that we still enjoy. Even though Jesus has ascended, he sent his spirit down and what he's done is made us into his body.

Jesus still lives on earth in a body. We are his hands and feet. We are his flesh and his bones, Paul said.

We are his body. He's the head and we are the members of his body and therefore we can still touch him when we touch each other. Jesus said, in as much as you've done it to the least of these, my brethren, you've done it to me.

So when you show kindness to somebody, especially a Christian brother, when you assist them, as Jesus said, I was naked and you clothed me. I was hungry, you fed me. I was sick and in prison, you visited me.

They said, when did we do that? We didn't see you in those conditions. Jesus said, well, when you did it to my brethren, you did that to me. We can actually see Jesus too and touch Jesus in a different form.

We don't know him in the same form. Paul said that in 2 Corinthians, I think it was in chapter 5, he said, though once we knew Jesus after the flesh, henceforth we don't know him that way anymore. But we still know him, just not that way.

John knew him like people know each other, looking at each other, talking to each other, touching each other, but we don't have exactly that same kind of phenomenon, but it's still possible to have a relationship and fellowship with him. He's still living. He's risen from the dead.

He's alive and he's given his spirit to each of us so that he actually lives in us. And when we're interacting with each other, we're interacting with him. And this is why John emphasizes so much the need to love one another.

And he says, you know, if you say you love God and you don't love your brother, you're lying again. Because anyone who hasn't loved his brother hasn't loved God. Because God is in that brother.

And so, John is wanting us to come to a full grasp of the depth of experience with God that we're to have when we walk in the light. And we're not putting up walls and so forth and obscuring things and pretending to be things we're not. He said, if we walk in the light, verse 7, we have fellowship with one another.

That is, we and God fellowship together with each other. And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. Now notice this cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus occurs while we are walking in the light.

This is important because sometimes you'll run into teachers, and they're on the radio too, I've run into them, who take 1 John 1, 9 and they say, this is not really for Christians. Because it says, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And they say, we don't have to confess our sins.

We've been born again. He's paid for all our sins, past, present, and future. When you sin, you shouldn't confess your sin because you're acting like he hasn't already covered it.

You act like it's undealt with. There are teachers who, really, their whole ministry is based almost on this one claim that you never, it's like love means never having to say you're sorry. If you sin against God, you never have to say you're sorry.

In fact, you shouldn't. Because if you say you're sorry, if you confess, if you repent, it's like you're acting like you don't know that Jesus already covered all that. And so it's kind of an insult to him.

Some teachers actually say, in fact, they call her on the radio, asked me if I thought this because they'd heard it from some other teacher just, I think it was yesterday or the day before. It wasn't the day before because that was Sunday. But recently, they said, do you think that God is angry when we ask for forgiveness, when we confess our sins? And this person had been listening to another teacher who said you never have to confess your sins.

And of course, when teachers say that, the one verse people bring up most of all is 1 John 1.9. Well, what about this one? If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And those teachers say, well, that's not really talking to Christians. That's talking to non-Christians, you know, about being converted.

It's not talking about Christians maintaining their walk with God. Well, one might be able to suggest that with some credibility if verse 9 was not in a context. But of course, every verse in the Bible is in a context and verse 9 is in the context that includes verse 7. Both verse 7 and verse 9 talk about us being cleansed by the blood of Jesus from sin.

In verse 7 it says the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Verse 9 says he is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. These are the same subject matter.

Now, both of them state a condition. In verse 9 it's if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In verse 7, talking about the same thing, it says if we walk in the light.

As I said, walking in the light is confessing your sins. Walking in the light is not trying to conceal your defects or trying to pretend to be something more than you are. When you confess your sin humbly, you are in the light.

You're bringing it to the light. And that being so, while we walk in the light, we're cleansed from our sins. Walking is a process.

It's not an event. If we walk in the light, it isn't something you do one time and then it's done. Walking is what you do for the rest of your life as a Christian.

If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now, I might just say something about verse 9, too, where it says if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Now, a lot of people think, well, shouldn't it say something more like he's faithful and merciful or faithful and gracious to forgive us our sins? How is it a matter of justice? God doesn't owe us forgiveness, does he? Justice means where you get what's coming to you. You get something that would be an injustice for you to be deprived of it. If you get your just due, it means that you're getting that which if you didn't receive it, that's an injustice to be redressed.

Does God owe us forgiveness of sins? Is his forgiveness of us justice or is it mercy? Well, it's justice. Why is it justice? Because Jesus purchased it on our behalf. If something is paid for and the product is not delivered, that's an injustice.

Jesus paid for our sins when he died. If God withholds forgiveness when we meet the conditions for forgiveness, if he says, well, in your case, I'm not going to forgive you. I'm just not feeling very charitable today.

Well, that's an injustice. It was paid for. And it's not cheating me because I don't personally deserve it anyway.

It's cheating Jesus who paid the price. If you have a relative who's being held for ransom and you pay the price of the ransom and the person doesn't go free, you're cheated. You who paid the price have been cheated.

Of course, the person who doesn't get released suffers for it too, but they didn't pay the

price anyway. We didn't pay the price for our forgiveness but Jesus did. Therefore, it would be an injustice for God not to forgive, an injustice to Jesus who paid for it and doesn't receive what he paid for if God doesn't forgive.

So, we find that God's forgiveness of us is not something that's contingent on whether he's feeling merciful at any given time. You see, mercy is never owed. And if it's never owed, it might not be extended.

I mean, sometimes we're merciful, sometimes we're not as merciful. Remember, even of God. Paul says in Romans 9, God says, I will have mercy upon whom I'll have mercy.

Which implies not so much on everyone, but the ones I want to, I will. So, if it was simply a matter of me waiting on God's mercy every time, I might not know if he's feeling merciful today or not. But he's always just.

He can't be unjust. There is no injustice in him. Therefore, since Christ has purchased my forgiveness, God owes it to Jesus to forgive me.

He doesn't owe it to me. He owes it to Jesus. And if he doesn't forgive, he's being unjust, which he is not.

That's just the point. He's faithful and just. He's never been unjust or unfaithful.

Therefore, you can count on it. Jesus' death has secured and guaranteed the forgiveness of sins of those who will confess them humbly before God and come to him on his terms. Now, that statement about confessing sins is couched between two statements about sin.

If we say that we have no sin, and if we say that we have not sinned. I'm not sure if John means this as differently from each other as theologians take it, but I'll just take it the way the theologians do. If we say that we have no sin, which seem to be saying, if we claim that we don't have a nature that's sinful.

If we claim that we don't have any propensity towards sin. Whereas the second statement in verse 10, if we say we have not sinned, would be denying that we've committed actual sins. And both are an issue, of course.

We have sin in our members, Paul said, but we also commit acts of sin. God could forgive our acts of sin, but we still have this problem with the sin that's generated within us on a regular basis because of our nature to be selfish and sinful. So, it sounds like John may be addressing both issues.

If someone says we have no sin, meaning we have nothing in us of a sin nature, then, well, we're deceiving ourselves. We think we're better than we really are. And the truth isn't in us.

We might as well come clean on that. But in verse 10, if we say we have not sinned, is a different issue. Saying that I've never committed any sins.

I could admit that I have a sinful nature, but I happen to have reined it in. I've never committed any sins. Well, that's a lie, of course.

But one might theoretically say such a thing. And he says, no, you can't deny that you have sinned, and you can't deny that you have sinned. Because you have sin in you as part of your fallen nature, and you have sinned as part of your personal history.

And both of those things are humbling to admit. But he says, go ahead, humble yourself, and admit it. If we confess it, then God forgives it.

He does not forgive unconfessed sin. There's a proverb that says, he that conceals his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall find mercy. It's in the book of Proverbs.

I forget the reference. I would have looked it up if I knew I was going to bring it up. But, whoever conceals his sin shall not prosper, Solomon said, but whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will find mercy.

And that's, of course, what John is saying in different words here. Now, we're going to stop there. He does go on in the next chapter to say, I'm writing these things so that you don't sin.

Now, you've got to be honest about the fact that you have sinned, but I'm writing so that you won't sin, hoping you won't. But if you do, he's very realistic, he says, but if anyone does sin, we do have a recourse. We have an advocate with the Father.

We don't have to despair. All is not lost if we do sin. But I'm writing so you won't.

I'm hoping you will not want to sin and that you will avoid sin, but, let's be realistic, no matter how hard you try to avoid sin, sometimes you're going to stumble, and we do have an advocate with the Father for times like that. And so that's how he begins the second chapter, but we'll hold off on that until the next time.