

## 1 John 1:4-10

“Fellowship Through Forgiveness”

Understand that fellowship with God and fullness of joy go hand in hand. John in writing *to* us of the fullness of joy that he desires to be a reality *in* us tells us plainly in Vs 3 of Ch 1 of his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle that, that joy is predicated upon a proper understanding *of* and a right relationship *with* the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ It is *not* predicated upon peachy circumstantial surroundings but rather a right relationship with God. What that means is that true joy is only available to the believer, to the Christian/the child of God. Now the unbeliever may experience *happiness*, but they don't know joy.

Remember when Jesus was speaking to His disciples just prior to the cross; He said to them, “These *things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*” John 15:11 “That My joy may remain in [who] in *you*” that is, in those of you who *know* Me, who have a personal relationship *with* Me, My disciples, those who follow after Me. What things did He speak to them? That's the famous John Ch 15 passage, remember? Jesus told them to *abide in Him* and to let *His word* abide in them. In other words maintain and safeguard your relationship with Me, spend time *with* Me, seeking *after* Me and let My word permeate you, make an impact *on* you, fashion changes *in* you. He's emphasizing the relationship that needs to be prioritized and linking that deep abiding joy of the Lord directly to it.

Now, happiness is a variable, it waxes and wanes with my emotions, it's not connected in any way with the Spirit. It was Christmas Eve, there I was cleaning the garage with a ferocity wanting to make room for the van because it was snowing, we had to go to the folks house the next day and I wanted to be a blessing to my family, not make them walk out in the snow on Christmas but just be able to get in the van and go. I was happy to do it, it was Christmas Eve and I wanted to just do something that would bless everyone. So there I am happily cleaning out in the frigid cold. I go over to my motorcycle to move it out of the way and as I was backing it up I lightly bumped an upright support on the treadmill sitting there and it was so cold that the back fender on my motorcycle snapped...I wasn't happy anymore.

You come to me with woes of economic ruin, you tell me that you're in deep, you owe thousands, this will be repossessed, that will be lost. You're not happy, so I sit down and right you a check for \$25,000; now you're elated, you're stoked, you're so happy...until you go to the bank and try to cash it; then you're not happy anymore.

So, happiness is a variable based upon human emotion. Joy is a deeper abiding quality that's not based upon my circumstances, it's predicated upon a right relationship with God therefore it's only available to the believer. It can't be "manufactured" with in us, by us. It's the byproduct of fellowship with God; that's why David said, "*You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" Ps 16:11 Sin promises joy, but always brings sorrow, it allures with temporary pleasure, but in the end produces death. God's pleasures are forevermore, they will last throughout eternity. You can be going through the most trying of times circumstantially and your happiness may be in ruins personally, but God's joy will sustain you inwardly.

Remember the words of Nehemiah? "...*the joy of the Lord is your strength.*" Neh 8:10 In 1 Pet Ch 1:6-8 Peter acknowledged the circumstantial hardship and affliction that those to whom he was writing were going through. They were being tried and tested, persecuted and pushed around, yet with regard to Christ he said, "*Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*" 1 Peter 1:8 You haven't seen Him with your eyes, yet you *believe in* Him, you have a relationship *with* Him therefore abiding in you is a joy inexpressible and full of glory that transcends your circumstances.

You're not focused on yourself, but upon your relationship with Him and the well being of others. Nothing will rob you of the joy of the Lord faster than to focus in on yourself. Perhaps you've heard the old acrostic J.O.Y. J.esus, O.thers, Y.ou. Jesus 1<sup>st</sup>, yourself last and others in between. You get that in any other order and the joy of the Lord will begin to erode from your life. The Spirit of God wants you to have fullness of joy; safeguard a right relationship with the Lord, *fellowship* with Him. That's why you were created, to have fellowship with God.

How can I do that, on what platform, in what arena do I meet with the Lord, and have fellowship with God? Let's consider today's text.

Vs5

with in the context then of fellowship let me just say this; if there's a problem with our fellowship with God, it's *our* fault; it's not God's fault. How can I say that so confidently? Because God is light, there's no sin, no *darkness* in Him *at all*.

It reminds me of the older couple driving down the road, they were in one of those old cars that had the bench seat in the front and they had been married for years. The wife seeing a young couple driving down the road practically joined at the hip, looked at her husband and said, “What happened to us? We used to be just like that, sitting so close and all.” The husband looked over at his wife and being a man of few words simply said, “I haven’t moved.” Can I say it’s just the same way in our relationship with God, don’t bring him into the equation as it pertains to a distancing of yourself, He hasn’t moved. In Him there is no darkness at all.

“This is the message that we have heard from Him and declare to you.” Now you won’t find this quote in any of the gospel records, yet we shouldn’t reduce ourselves to thinking that the only things that Jesus ever said were written down in the gospels or else everything that ever came out of His mouth could be uttered in a few hours. Jesus spent years pouring into His disciples, communicating to them, showing them and sharing with them the heart of God. This is one of those things that undoubtedly Jesus made known to them, the message that He communicated to them that John is now making known to us, “...that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

What does it mean, “God is light.”? John is using this phrase to help us establish the nature of God as opposed to the nature of man. Light and darkness are mutually exclusive having nothing in common nor anything to do with one another. The fact that God is light speaks to the holiness and absolute sinlessness of His nature as to where man left to himself abides in darkness; our deeds are evil, tainted by sin and completely self seeking.

God is light. That phrase ought to begin to open our understanding revealing to us certain things concerning the attributes of God; not everything, we also know that God is love, God is life, God is a consuming fire.

These are some of the phrases that the scriptures employ in order to communicate to us and reveal to us some of the attributes of God. For instance light invariably exposes things, when you’re in the dark so often you can’t really see, you don’t know what’s in front of you or what’s happening around you. Because of that you can at times feel a pseudo sense of security and safety that’s really not true at all. It seems that at some point in every Indiana Jones movie the archaeologist finds himself in some dark cavern, some precarious position of darkness, and everyone stays calm until a torch is lit revealing all kinds of snakes and spiders and other various and sundry hebe-jebe creatures and then all panic ensues. I think there are 2 applications to that. #1 I think people in the world have a false sense of security, when you’re in the dark you can’t see all the pitfalls and otherwise deadly scenarios around you and because of that you have a pseudo sense of safety.

But when the light of Christ shines upon your life you begin to see that you're not in a good place at all, death is all around you and you gotta get out of there. Of course for some people would rather stay and suffer the consequences than be saved, rescued from death by Christ. John told us, "And this is the condemnation, that the 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." John 3:19-20 Light exposes things, the 2<sup>nd</sup> application? The light of Christ shines into our dark hearts and reveals to us things that ought not be there, that need to be repented of, done away with, turned away from, we like to cover our dark little secrets, Jesus will expose them. The bible is clear, Heb 4:13 "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." There's nothing hidden from God, He's light, He sees all, every thought, every deed, every intent, all of it. It's been said that secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven. Our sin is right there before Him, because He's light.

Of course light diffuses darkness, it guides us, points out the path, light facilitates life, and growth, it speaks of the glory, the radiance, the beauty and the wonders of God. Studies are showing positive results in using "light therapy" in treating various anxiety disorders and depression; imagine that. Coming into the light can help stabilize people mentally/emotionally... Now, the question we began with was how or in what context do I fellowship with God? Here's a hint, God is light, notice Vs 6

Vs6-7

God is light, therefore if we're to have fellowship with Him it will be *in the light*, in that arena of holiness, purity, integrity, humility before Him, openness unto Him. If we say that we have fellowship with Him; that is, we have something in common with Him and yet we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. Do you see how straight forward that is, it takes the complexities, the ambiguities, the uncertainties right out of it.

Without intending to be rude or insensitive can I just be blunt with you? If you claim to be on the same page as God, to have a right, current and ongoing relationship *with* God, that you *fellowship* with Him and yet your life is earmarked by the unfruitful works of darkness, you are a liar and you do not practice the truth. You cannot have fellowship with God (Who is light) and hang out in darkness, they're mutually exclusive.

Now I want to state the fact that the context here is that of *fellowship* not *family*, what I mean by that is that being out of fellowship with God is not tantamount to forfeiting your salvation. Now certainly unbelievers are in the dark and they're not saved.

As for a believer it's all too common for a believer to try and hide some sorta secret sin and put up a front as though everything is good between them and God. Yet the bible is clear that if you're partaking of the unfruitful works of darkness, if you're *walking* in darkness, you're not in fellowship with God. At best you're faking it, it's a lie, it's hypocrisy. When we speak of walking in darkness we're talking about a practiced pattern, a lifestyle of sin. Not an occasional point in time whereby I fail. We all sin, but what's the pattern, the general demeanor of my life. If it's a practiced pattern of darkness, you're not practicing the truth, you're living a lie to say it's all good between you and God.

John is seeking to splash some spiritual cold water in our faces saying, "Hey wake up, quit the compromise and get right with God." It's unbelievable the amount of Christians who have live in relationships these days and never get married, living in compromise purporting it's all good between them and God. Am I saying they're not saved? No, but I would say there's been a breach of fellowship between them and God. How many believers today still find themselves partying with some form of regularity and they think that God understands, there's grace, it's still good between them and God. Yet it's all too obvious to say there's been a breach of fellowship. God is light, I can't live in darkness and think that me and God are on mutual terms. Do me a favor, leave 1<sup>st</sup> John, turn quickly to Ephesian Ch 5 (Vs 1-13)

Now there are other passages that point out other things, but the point is this; if those kinds of things (referred to as the unfruitful works of darkness) typify your life you're not walking in the light, you're not in fellowship with God. You can't say you're walking in fellowship *with* God yet knowingly lead a life of disobedience *to* God. Nor can you say that you're close to the Lord leading a life of misery, you're in fellowship with God yet in a constant state of depression and despondency...those aren't fingerprints of God in your life, they're evidence of a falling out of fellowship at best.

Now again it doesn't mean that you're not saved; I think David would be a great example of this. He lusts after Bathsheba, commits adultery, instead of coming clean and admitting what he'd done he tried to cover his sin. He lied about it all and acted like things were still good between him and God. He got her husband drunk trying to get him to sleep with his wife to cover it up yet he refused because he wouldn't go home and enjoy his wife when all his closest friends were on the battlefield sacrificing for the kingdom. So David has him murdered, takes Bathsheba to be his own wife, continued to try and cover his sin, this goes on for over a year. Finally Nathan (his chaplain, the Prophet) confronts him and you know how it went from there. (If not you can read of it in 2 Sam 12) here's my point, David didn't stop being a child of God, but he was definitely out of fellowship with God. How was his fellowship restored? We'll get to that in a minute, for now Vs 7.

Vs 7

You see the arena of fellowship is found in the light. What does it mean to “walk in the light.” Again the word “walk” speaks of a lifestyle, how it is that I conduct myself in life. I want to state that walking in the light does not mean walking in sinless perfection. Because Vs 7 tells us quite plainly that if we walk in the light as He’s in the light the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If walking in the light spoke of sinless perfection we wouldn’t need the perpetual cleansing of the blood of Christ applied to us while we were *in* the light. It’s in the light that the cleansing power of the blood of Christ is imputed to us; the word “cleanses” is in the present tense meaning that it’s a continual ongoing action. The cleansing power of the blood of Christ continues to wash over us in the light creating that basis for fellowship with God. You see if walking in darkness is to have a lifestyle that is in harmony with the world than to walk in the light is to have a life (i.e. our behavior, attitude and actions) that is in harmony with God’s character and the attributes of holiness, obedience to the word. Again Jesus called it “abiding in Him.”

Now real quick when he says, “we have fellowship with one another.” The question comes up, is it a reference to God, or to the body of Christ. To which I would say, “Yes” if you walk in the light as He is in the light you will have fellowship with God. Simultaneously if you love the Lord and are fellowshiping with the Lord than you’re going to experience that koinonia, that fellowship with other believers who are walking in the light as well.

By the way You might note that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from *all* sin, but it won’t cleanse you from so much as 1 excuse. You can seek to justify yourself, or let the blood of Jesus justify you, but you can’t have it both ways.

Vs8

I know it’s hard to believe but there are places that teach that you can actually come to a place of total sanctification meaning that you will actually not sin in this life. You can grow to a state of sinless perfection in this life...But John states very definitively right here that if you claim that you have no sin you’re only deceiving yourself. Can I just tell you that you’re not deceiving anyone else! But you are deceiving yourself. Oh, you might have your temper under control, you’ve not murdered anyone, or stolen anything, what about the secret sins of the heart, have you coveted? What about lust? Or even more subtle, from the time you got out of bed have you glorified God perfectly, in speech, in attitude, in your actions. Was there a moment where God wasn’t the absolute priority of your heart and mind?

Then here's the fact, you've sinned. You see there are not only sins of *commission*, there are sins of *omission*, it's not only about what you do, it's also about what you don't do. Do you maintain a servant's heart 24/7, do you always put your own desires last and prioritize everyone else every time? You see? We sin. But as we walk in the light Christ will cleanse us of that sin, it's not about our seeking to *cover it*, it's about our readiness to *confess it*, notice.

Vs9-10

Now, with regularity you hear me take and make *application* to Vs 9 in an evangelical way to the unbeliever; as a reference to *salvation*. But the actual *interpretation* belongs to the family of God, coming clean with your sin that you might experience *restoration* into fellowship with God. Don't try to cover it, that's what David did. Do you remember what he said? He said, "*When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*" Ps 32:3-5 What does it mean to "confess" your sin? It doesn't mean to state the obvious, "Yip, I did it." Well, that's a statement, it's not necessarily a confession.

The word literally means "to say the same thing" it means you look at your sin through the same lens that God does and you agree with Him about it concerning what it cost Him, the damage it does, the destruction it brings upon you and those around you and you see the need to turn *from* it and not be a repeat offender *in* it. In reality you take sides with God against yourself.

Now again forgiveness predicated upon our confession; our forgiveness is predicated upon our receiving the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross on our behalf. It's impossible that we should realize and confess every sin that we ever commit; it's the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us. John is speaking to the vital nature of confession as it pertains to maintaining fellowship with God. As the Lord convicts us, reveals sin to us that is hindering our fellowship it's our part to confess it, to turn from it and receive that cleansing and forgiveness that we might continue on in fellowship with God unhindered.

You see God forbid that the promise of 1 John 1:9 should lead one *into* sin; "I can go ahead and sin because if I confess God will forgive." There's no surer sign that you're already out of fellowship with God if that's your mentality. This promise should lead us *out of* sin with the understanding that God's faithfulness to us is only made possible through the tremendous sacrifice of Jesus Christ and that the wrath we deserve was poured out upon Him because of His love for us.

What does it mean, “He is faithful.” Underline that in your bible, “He is faithful” it means He’s true to His word, He’s not a man that He should lie He will always do what He says He’ll do. You can rely upon Him, trust *in* Him, He is faithful. Doesn’t mean there won’t be ups and downs, or tremendously tough times in your life. Think of Ab, of Joseph, the nation of Israel, Moses, Joshua, David, all of the apostles, did they go through times of tribulation? Absolutely they did, was God faithful to them? with out question. Even so God will be faithful to you, to forgive you of your sin, when you confess it and turn from it. He will purge you, purify you, He will cast your sin from you as far as the east is from the west. Prov 28:13 “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*” Notice He doesn’t cleanse you of most unrighteousness, of the largest part of unrighteousness, but of *all* unrighteousness.

Vs10

Now, I don’t think that there are too many people today who will say that they’re perfect. But to get them to see themselves as *sinner*s is at times a really difficult thing to accomplish. They may “make mistakes” they might be “only human” but those phrases are thrown out there to excuse themselves or somehow defend/justify themselves. That’s completely different from knowing and admitting that, “I am a sinner!” Why do I point that out? Because (Listen) God’s grace and mercy isn’t extended to people who make mistakes, it doesn’t come to those who are only human, or those who compare themselves amongst themselves so as to make themselves feel better about themselves. God’s grace is reserved exclusively for *sinner*s. Sinners who recognize their need for a Savior. Leave 1<sup>st</sup> John and turn quickly to Luke’s gospel Ch 18 where we’ll close. (Vs 9-14)

Don’t put God in the position of being called a liar, just come to Him; confess your sin before Him and find forgiveness in Jesus’ name.

Prayer Points:

God we’re so thankful that even though we’re so often times faithless You remain faithful. That as we come *to* You and simply agree *with* You about who we are and our need for forgiveness, that as You look into us and see a readiness to repent, a want to be near to You and right *with* You that You lead us in the way everlasting. That You cleanse us of our sin and put us in a place of fellowship, of intimacy with You.

If you’re in a place whereby you’ve *never* had fellowship with God, you don’t have a relationship with God, yet you want to be forgiven, you want to be cleansed, made clean in His sight. You can know that the blood of Jesus Christ will wipe away your every sin. If you will turn from your sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ God will rescue you from death, that is, He will give you eternal life, in His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand pleasures forevermore. Doesn’t mean a life of worry free bliss, but forgiveness of sin and everlasting life. Believe upon Him, receive Him today.