

1 John 1 vs 1-2

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Date: 28 July 2019

[0 : 00] Good evening. We'll be looking this evening at 1 John 1 and the first four verses.

That's 1 John 1 verses 1 to 4. 1 John 1 verses 1 to 4.

1 John 1 verses 1 to 5.

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We want to be like our Savior and I pray that you would bring that about through what we do here this evening. In your name, amen. Well, I should point out to begin with that these words are like a summary or a topic sentence for what John's going to be speaking of in the rest of his epistle.

[2 : 08] He's laying out at the beginning of the epistle, here's why I'm writing to you. He's going to be revealing to us Jesus Christ, this incarnate Son of God, and the implications that his incarnation, his work on our behalf has for us.

So, if we were to look through all of 1 John, we would see that theme developed and explained and expounded upon. We'll, of course, only be looking at these first four verses this evening.

And I see two things that I want to bring to your attention in this introduction. First off, John's writing in response to a great reality, a great problem that confronts mankind.

And he's going to tell us what God has done to respond to that problem. So, those are the two main points that we'll be talking about this evening.

Now, the problem is implicit in the text. We see here, John says in verse 3, We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

[3 : 20] And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. Now, if you were spending a good evening with a friend of yours, and some other, some third friends and mutual acquaintance came along and said, Well, I'm here to reunite the two of you and bring you back into fellowship with one another.

You might say, Well, that's not really necessary, is it? Because the fellowship already exists. The fellowship isn't broken. Or you could imagine, perhaps, if you had been a rebel, along with other rebels against your king, and had a broken relationship with him and were alienated from him. And then one of those fellow rebels with which you had participated, the king had graciously made terms of peace with him, brought him back into a state where they could be at one with one another, be in union with one another.

The problem of alienation had been dealt with. And then he sent that former rebels and emissaries that go to these other people who have rebelled against me and bring this good news that you have been restored to fellowship with me and that they can have fellowship with me again, too.

And that's the sort of case that John is talking about here. Something had happened in the life of the apostles that had restored them to fellowship with God.

[4 : 52] And so John says that they have fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And he's coming to others and saying, You can have fellowship, too.

And so implicit in that, embedded in that, is this great reality that mankind has a problem. And that problem is alienation from God.

The problem is that we're not in fellowship with God the way that we're supposed to be. And so John's purpose for writing is to respond to that problem. He, his fellow apostles, those who have been known by God, they have that fellowship restored.

And he's writing so that we can join them in that fellowship. We can have that fellowship, too, with the Father and with the Son. So that's the problem.

You know, mankind was made to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That's the great purpose for which mankind was made.

[5 : 50] That's the creation norm for mankind. We were to be in fellowship with God. You can imagine Adam and Eve then in the Garden of Eden when, before the fall, they're living in just this paradise.

There's an unspoiled creation full of delights, full of things to know and understand. And then Adam and Eve are living there in the Garden of God, this paradisaal place that God had made for them to live in.

And they're doing the work that God's given them to do. And it's untroubled by all the ills of the fall. It's a wonderful paradisaal state. And then there's just this pinnacle of their experience.

In the cool of the day, God comes and walks with them, communes with them. This was the state of man. This is how mankind was designed to function. A creature in participation with and in fellowship with by his creator.

A creature made in the image of his creator so that he didn't, you know, all the other things that God made. You know, there are plants and animals and all those things.

[7 : 09] In some way, you could say, have a reciprocal relationship with God. God quickens things to life and causes plants to grow and causes animals to grow and to be able to do all the things that they need to do to live and to be.

And they, by their existence, testify to God's greatness and they glorify God. But mankind is unique in that creation. Because unlike all those other creatures, all those other aspects of creation, mankind is made in the image of God.

With the ability to commune with God in a special and unique way. To see God's greatness and his glory and the perfections of his being and to delight in it.

And those things in a way that a tree or an elephant isn't suited to delight. God could come and he could speak to Adam and Eve.

He could give them a commission. He could explain to them, this is how you can live in a way that's fruitful and bountiful and peaceful. This is how I will relate to you.

[8 : 21] This is how you can relate to me. So mankind is made in this unique way to have fellowship with God. And our first parents enjoyed that.

They experienced that. And then God would come to them and be with them in the cool of the day. And you could imagine that just being the pinnacle, the highest delight of all the delights of creation. That's the norm for mankind. That's the way mankind was designed to function. That's where mankind finds his greatest expression, his greatest fulfillment of what it means for him to be the creature that God made him to be.

It's in fellowship with God, in communion with God. And that was the state of man. And then we know how the story went. There was this terrible circumstance that resulted in not fellowship with God, but alienation from God.

And it's important to note right off that it's not just some catastrophe that came along and caught Adam and Eve unawares.

[9 : 33] It's not as though they were going along, you know. And some accident happened that resulted in this disunity, in this breaking of fellowship between God and man.

Adam and Eve willfully sinned against God. And that fellowship that they were designed to have was broken. And that's the reality that John's speaking to. So Adam and Eve, rather than going out and meeting God, here's our creator.

We're going to be right with him, just before the face of God and delight in his presence. Instead, they run and hide and cover themselves and invent lies and blame one another.

And everything that was at the core of what it meant to be the creature that God made mankind to be on that day was lost.

That's the alienation. That's the breaking of fellowship that John's addressing. That's the emergency to which God is responding.

[10 : 41] I was thinking of the passage in Ephesians 4, describing the state of man. Ephesians 4.18 says, They're darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

Can you imagine what a profound and dreadful assessment that is of creatures made to fellowship with God?

That one great central thing. It's cut off. They're alienated. Alienated from God. And then Romans 1, verses 21 to 23.

You'll be familiar with these words as well. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools. And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

[11 : 57] Now, can you imagine just the beginning of that downward spiral of mankind? It was made to speak with God and commune with God and fellowship with God and respond to God's greatness by adoring him.

And just this initial, he exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. I'm wanting to impress upon my mind and see how wrong and backward this is from what God designed us to be.

Isaiah somewhere, he's describing the folly of the idolater. Various times he describes the idolater. He's building his idol. And one of the times when he says, well, he builds an idol that won't topple. It's like, oh, look at this, fellows. I attached this one to a real sturdy base. Look, I can push it and it just stands back up. It won't fall down. Well, there's something to worship. That's the folly of exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images.

Images of any kind. They can't even respond to you. You can't pour out your heart to them and they respond to you and they give you reassurance of their care for you.

[13 : 27] They can't reveal themselves to you. They can't speak to you through their word. They're just mutilous images. That's the folly that man falls into when he's alienated from God.

And then if you go on through this description, you see it just gets worse and worse. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man. Well, immortal man is certainly no match for the immortal God by way of praiseworthiness or someone to commune with. But you can understand, at least, man was made in the image of God. And it's impressive. You can see the statues of Ares or Zeus or Aphrodite in a temple.

It's impressive. Look at the elegant form and the strength and the representation of this being who exercises so much authority over the world. It's a large step down, though, from fellowship with the immortal God.

Then it gets worse. Images resembling mortal man and birds. Maybe those are majestic.

[14 : 43] Not perhaps as majestic as mankind. But you can picture the eagles on the standards of the Roman legions. Majestic and soaring through the heavens.

Oh, that's impressive, I suppose. Something to worship. But nothing like being in fellowship and communion with the immortal God.

And then it goes down from there to animals. There's beasts that run about on the earth. Hideous images of forms with uncouth limbs and the heads of elephants or dogs.

Things like that. And can bow down and prostrate themselves. Before that, because they're alienated from the God that they were designed to know and to worship. And then, in the sort of final step down, creeping things.

These are reptilian and frightful things that mankind would prostrate himself to. These are the asps on the headgear and the stabs of Egyptian potentates.

[15 : 55] The things from which people naturally recoil in horror. And that's the degradation. That's the downward spiral of mankind who is designed to be in communion with God.

And being alienated from God. Finds himself worshiping and serving and prostrating himself before and supplicating and speaking to and burning incense to things that are not God at all.

And so that's the state of man and his natural condition. And then if we would look through 1 John farther, we would see all the dimensions of the ugliness that results from and contributes to this alienation from God.

We would see lying. We would see idolatry. We would see the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We would see all of the evil effects that are found in this world as a result of the fact that we're cut off from God.

As a result of this great and awful truth that John's writing to address. And where that leaves us is that without God's intervention, without the incarnation that John's going to talk about, that's the state we're in.

[17 : 26] We're cut off from God. We're alienated from him. The fellowship that we were designed to have with him is lost. And missing that chief end, it doesn't matter.

In a sense, what other good things we do, what other things we get right. I used to drive past a house one summer. For whatever reason, my path this one summer kept on leading me past. A house toward mountaintop. A great, lovely estate. Broad and spreading ground. A big driveway carving up to the entrance.

Huge portico and columns there. And big, impressive doorway. And an arched window above it. And a beautiful chandelier hanging there in the doorway.

And the most expensive kind of roofing on the roof of it. And brilliant plans. And all the service elements of the house. The electricity and the plumbing and all run in underground.

[18 : 25] So it would just be a marvelous estate. And it was sad to see because it never achieved the end for which it was created. It was never finished.

Perhaps the owners moved away. Perhaps they passed away. Perhaps it was a young family and they disbanded. And there was no more. Whatever, for whatever reason.

And the house never fulfilled the thing for which it was made. It was designed to be a place that was inhabited by people. It was designed to be a commodious residence for a family.

And it never did that. It sat there and weeds grew up here and there. And bits fell off. And there were some holes in the walls where windows were designed to be that were never put in, never constructed.

And it didn't matter at that point if the architecture was brilliant. It didn't matter if the carpenters who built the walls built them out of the best materials and built them plumb and true and firm.

[19 : 36] It didn't matter if all the spaces inside the house were perfectly planned. It didn't matter if the excavators had done a brilliant job excavating and if the masons had built a true and strong foundation.

None of that mattered. Because the house never did the thing for which the house was built. It was ultimately futile. And that's the state of man after the fall.

That's the state of man that John is addressing here. He's writing because mankind is in a state of emergency. Being alienated from God.

Having lost fellowship with God. And he's coming with this message. He's saying, God has restored fellowship between man and God.

God. We know. He's come to us. He's revealed himself to us. And he's brought to us the terms of peace. He's achieved that peace.

[20 : 44] And we're bringing this message to you so that you can join in this fellowship. So that you can be united again to the God for whom you were created. Now, some of you have known that redemption.

Some of you here have known that redemption. You know what it is to be back in fellowship with the Father. You yearn for it more. And when you think on where you were before God had revealed himself to you and where you are now, your heart rejoices.

I was talking to a brother a couple months ago who was a new acquaintance and just talking to him about how did you come to know God. And he had become a Christian just a couple of years before.

And he said, before I was a Christian, I was like a dead man walking. It was like coming to life from the dead. And if you've known God, if you've known that restoration of fellowship, you know exactly what he's talking about.

You know what it is. It is to finally, you have a way to fulfill that purpose for which God made you. It's possible for you again to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[21 : 50] It's possible for you to have fellowship with God. You read something like Psalm 73. Whom have I in heaven but you?

And having you, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail me, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Or I was caught by the words that Carl led us in this evening from Psalm 63.

You read words like this. And doesn't your heart just leap up and say, yes, that's what I've known in the kindness of God. Oh God, you're my God. Earnestly I seek you.

My soul thirsts for you and my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I've seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory because your love is better than life.

My lips will glorify you. If you've known that restoration of fellowship, doesn't your heart just jump up and say, oh, that's what I want. That's what I long for. Oh, if I was more consistent in that.

[22 : 49] Oh, if I had that more in my reading of the scriptures. If I had that more in my prayer life. If I had that more in my daily life as I do the work and the recreation that I do.

If I was more in fellowship with God. If I was always beholding His glory. If I was always just knowing that unbroken fellowship with God. That's what you yearn for. Some of you here tonight, you haven't known that.

You're still in the state that was described in those verses that I read before. Cut off from the life of God and if you are, don't stay there.

It's not what you were made for. And you won't find a way to be the creature that God made you to be apart from that. Well, that's the problem.

That's what John is writing to address. And then, we have, well, what did God do? What did God do to restore us?

[23 : 59] John says that the Son of God came incarnate into this world. We have these words, that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched.

This we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life was pure, the life appeared, and we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

And it's necessary to point out then at the beginning that this is the second person of the Trinity that John's talking about. This is the Son of God. This is one who always had fellowship with the Father back and back and back age upon age all the way.

There's not even a way to say it. Our languages, our different languages have phrases that we come up with that are like metaphysical phrases to try to describe what's all the way. If you could just keep on going back and back, we say things like world without end to point in the other direction or in cyclos, cyclorum in Latin or ace tonion in Greek where words that are just a way to say age upon age all the way back this son had fellowship with the Father.

And he came into this world incarnate. And what I want to emphasize to us tonight is that what he brought for us and earned for us and achieved for us was not essentially the fact that he had always been with the Father and always had fellowship with the Father, that divine fellowship that exists between the persons of the Trinity.

[25 : 46] But he came and became a man like us so that he could achieve in our place the fellowship with the Father of a man who lived and obeyed and fellowshiped with God.

You see that emphasis in the very beginning here of what John says. That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.

This we proclaim to you concerning the word of life. This was a man who lived in this world in a body like ours. The disciples could take him by the hand, could embrace him, hold him to them. He was an incarnate human being. He didn't just come like a stone skipping across the surface of a pond and it just sort of touches down and bounces along or like a raid by special forces.

You know, there's some emergency and they come zooming in and they take care of what the problem is and they zoom out. They barely touch the ground. It's been and gone. It wasn't like that.

[27 : 02] There wasn't a way for the human righteousness that we need to stand in our place unless the Son became incarnate and here in this world believed God and obeyed God and fellowshiped with God and built and developed for us the righteousness that we need.

And so he wasn't like a stone skipping across the surface. He was like he went down and down and down and down into it and he became a collection of cells in the womb of the Hebrew maid and he was born like any other human being was born.

Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh and he came as a man into this world with all the troubles, with all the exigencies, with all the limitations of a human body, a human mind, a human psychology, a human way of thinking and learning and knowing and believing.

You can imagine he was just a little boy growing up and he learned to speak the language of his day and to read and he could he could open a scroll and with eyes like ours and optic nerves and a brain like ours that processes information.

He read it and understood it and grew in his maturity and his wisdom. It says that after the scene in the temple when he was already amazing, the teachers in the temple and he went back home and he was obedient to his parents and he grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man.

[29 : 00] That was the kind of earning of everything that we needed on his part. And so he could read something like Isaiah 53 and understand this is what it's going to mean for me to be the Messiah.

and going to suffer like this passage describes as a sin bearer. And he could believe that the last half of Isaiah 53 would be true.

That the Father would raise him from the dead that after the suffering of his soul he would see the light of life and be satisfied. He could as a man read Psalm 22 in the first half always speaks of the suffering of God's servant and is crying out for help.

And then he could face the fact that this is what it's going to be for me to do the work of the Lamb of God. And he could believe the second half of Psalm 22 that he would live and declare God's name to his brothers and that he would be victorious.

I'm saying all that to say that the righteousness that we need the restoration of fellowship that we need with the Father was a hard-earned fellowship on the part of a man the Son of God with everything that it is to be a man added to him given God's spirit without measure so that he could achieve for us and restore for us the fellowship that we had broken by our indefensible lives.

[30 : 55] You see that in Hebrews 5 these words are so astonishing to me it says in the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and I want to point out there just as I'm going along this is this is the Son this is this man Jesus speaking to the Father in fellowship with the Father communing with the Father pouring out his heart to the Father he offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence although he was a son he learned obedience through what he suffered and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek in other words it was the work of of believing the Father of fellowshiping with the Father of hearing

God speak to him through God's word through his revelation of himself of praying and pouring out his heart to the Father it was with all the ordinary apparatus of a human mind and human body and human psychology and what it means for someone to believe God and entrust himself to God that kind of entrusting that says says I know you I can depend on you I can I can cast myself on you and and receiving back from God his his assurance of his goodness it was it was the development and the nurturing and the sustaining of that fellowship with God is one aspect of what what Jesus life of righteousness here achieved on our behalf so that the son the son had access to the father he could speak to the father he could he could he could say to the father oh father give me give me this and the father would hear him you know you and I we couldn't go

I couldn't go boldly into God's presence in my own name and say oh well God I want you to give me this and that I pray this I almost hesitate to say it I pray this in the name of Aaron we can't do that I can't bring the goodness of my fellowship with God into God's presence and be heard because of my reverence but Jesus could he could say to his disciples whatever you ask of in my name that I will do that the father may be glorified in the son because Jesus has the ear of the father he has fellowship with the father well that was that was the righteousness that that that Jesus brought for us that was the restoration of of fellowship with the father that Jesus earned for us he would go out and spend nights in prayer to the father he would he would read the scriptures so that he knew it and he could be he could be handed a scroll in a synagogue and oh he wouldn't be like oh I wonder what am I going to talk because he knew the scriptures because he had fellowshiped with God and he he knew his father that's that's almost the end of of the story two more things this

Jesus the son of God who had always had fellowship with the father before the worlds were made and who in the days of this life developed and sustained and nurtured and built this fellowship with the father that was was adequate and plentiful and complete for to stand in our stead he brought that and all of his obedience on our behalf he brought it to the father never one thing in this man impeccable never one thing wrong never one time when he when he he said why I'm not willing to follow your father in that never one time when he when he read some portion of the scripture and God was speaking to him the way that God teaches us and he said well I can't believe that I can't trust you here always always doing the will of the father always hearing the father always speaking the words of the father always in fellowship with the father he brought all of that in my place and your place to God it was absolutely perfect he presented it to God as an atoning sacrifice and the father the father turned his back on him as one would say depart from me I never knew you can you imagine he was bearing our sin we and all our fathers have gone astray we've been alienated from God we've been cut off from God there was no way for us in ourselves to restore that relationship and this this perfect man came and he achieved that for us and because he was

bearing our sins the father turned away from him as though he was the one who was who couldn't come before

[37 : 10] God he was he was rejected by the father can you imagine for for our sakes and there there he bore our sins and he was he was the lamb of God and then I'm so thankful to say the story goes on after the suffering of his soul he did see the light of life and was satisfied because he hadn't sinned because he had always perfectly obeyed the father loved the father and fellowship with the father the father accepted his sacrifice and Jesus rose from the dead and I can't imagine every time I think of it I imagine this this man coming up out of the out of the grave can you can you imagine just the he's the new and everlasting man never to die again never never again to experience the rejection of the father never again to have fellowship with the father broken and and to bring into fellowship with with himself and and the father this countless multitude of redeemed he ascends to heaven father says you're my son today I've begotten you ask of me and I'll give you the nations as your inheritance the uttermost parts of the earth is your treasured possession he goes to heaven and what does he do there that fellowship that union with the father he's still speaking on our behalf I don't know how to talk to God the way that I should I don't know how to speak sometimes sometimes I would be ashamed I would hang my head because of my many impeachable deeds and there's the son with his unbroken fellowship with the father he's speaking to him on my behalf then the relationship is restored it's brought back together this is the marvelous message that John has for us he's just going to expound it further and further through his epistle that he has restored fellowship between God and all of his redeemed and so I say for those of you who know him rejoice in him and make that this is the great central thing of your life there's nothing with greater priority than being in fellowship with God there's nothing nothing nothing that well you know I'll get to that fellowship thing later maybe I'll find some time for that today maybe I can carve out a half an hour for that here or there in my day this is the great central thing in my life if you've known God all you want that more you want that more and more you want you just want every part of your life suffused with with fellowship with God everything that you do that you find yourself that you would say if it could be portrayed you say I wish that wasn't me you want less of that you want none of it because you don't want anything to come between you and God you don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit and for those of you who have not known this willing able and powerful savior don't remain in that place you can't restore fellowship with God yourself you can't come into his presence on your own and you will unavoidably there is the inevitable reality of each of our eventual decease and judgment and God has God has brought into

the world this savior who can restore your fellowship with him it's what you were made for the prophet said seek the Lord while he may be found call on him while he is near let the wicked forsake his way let the evil man forsake his evil thoughts and let him turn to the Lord for he will have mercy on him and to our God for he will freely pardon Lord I pray that you would bless the hearing of your word we are so thankful for you for your goodness to us our hearts when we see your goodness and your kindness and we see the terrible emergency out of which you have brought us and not just barely made us a way to eke out an existence before you but brought us into fellowship with you and sonship with you and we can commune with you forever and ever Lord how our hearts are thankful and pray that that would be on our hearts you would not let us move away from it or grow cold to it or forget it but that that you would you would just pour over us our sense of gratitude and thankfulness for so great a salvation your name Amen before we come to the Lord's table let's sing of this this love that is better than life this wondrous love in hymn number 261 hymn number 261 Jesuit buch I all oh oh oh oh oh Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 01] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, He became flesh.

He dwelt among us.