

12.11.22

1 John 1:4 – Fellowship Inextricably Tied

1 John 1:4 “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

How wonderful these words are that there is fullness of joy and what's interesting within the passage is that if you look at one translation, say the King James translation, it reads different than the New American Standard translation.

The way it reads within the New American Standard is “These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

The King James reads “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

They're not off, either of them and we're going to be talking about that specifically. But as we look at this passage and as we look to the book of 1 John, it is clear that we're looking at a letter as we come to the end of the book that tells us these things have been written to you, who believe. That you may know that you have everlasting life. People need to know that this whole thing of eternal security is secure. They need to have that sense of I know I'm going to heaven.

Both my folks are getting close to, and it seems like every day we're talking about them going today and it's wonderful to see the sense of reality in the dialogue that they're going to go home. My dad will say to me three or four times a day, “I'm ready to go home. I'm ready to go home.” I know that as the chorus tells us that it's going to be a day of rejoicing.

“When we all get to heaven

What a day of rejoicing that will be

When we all see Jesus

We'll sing and shout the victory”

We're looking forward to that day. But you need to know the reality, that this is true. So, the question is how can I know? And I guess in a way, we're not simply asking whether or not we can know that we have eternal life; but I think fundamentally we're asking how do I know that God loves me? Because there's absolutely no way that we could be in His presence unless He loved us. And so, throughout the pages of 1 John, he gives us these underpinnings and the strengthening that helps us to have great confidence in God's love. I think of the Old Testament and how many times it reminds us of God's love, not only in the Book of Genesis where, I mean, you can't help but comprehend that there is a great love for mankind when you see the way that God creates the earth. I mean, you see all the wonderful things and you know, there's one phrase in there, oh, yeah, “He created the heavens.” And we realize, ok, that was the universe. We just kind of went over the universe in one verse and then we come to the detail of even the

garden. And we go, ok. So why is He slowing down and why are we seeing the details of this? Because it's all for man, and you can't walk away from the beginning of Genesis and say that God didn't love man. I mean, all this was good. I mean, it says, "it was good. And it was good. And it was good. It was very good." So, you can't say, "He didn't like me." He displays by His goodness, and you come into the Book of Exodus, and you go through the rest of the Pentateuch, and you begin to realize that in the very details of the law, God is demonstrating His love for us. I mean, He's saying, "I don't want you guys to kill each other off and I don't want you to take things that don't belong to you." And you begin to read the law and you begin to realize that, ok, He actually wants us to get along and He cares for us. So, in the law you hear His love.

You come into the Psalms and in one of the great Psalms that we recently had gone through is Psalm 136, that's about 26 verses. Real quick. I'll have you memorize half of the verses in this particular song,

"For His lovingkindness is everlasting."

That's half of the song, because he repeats it in every verse, "His loving kindness is everlasting. His lovingkindness is everlasting." And you begin to realize that Scripture is telling us that God loves us. He loves us. It's hard not to extrapolate from the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 30:18, this phrase just haunts me and baffles me, and that is "the Lord longs to be gracious to you,"

He longs to be gracious. The loving kindness of the Lord, as Jeremiah will convey, never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. God loves you. Yet as you read through the Old Testament, there is this sense of "Really?". I mean, you see the Israelites and Moses is talking to God on the mountain and the Israelites go, "You go. We don't want to talk to him. Quite frankly, he scares me to death." And so he goes up and talks with him and you can see the kind of estrangement all the way through the Old Testament. If in fact, Theophanes or Christophanies is seen in the Old Testament where you see the presence of God among men, they're kind of scratching their head, "I'm not dead yet?" Is it because God is unclear? He tells us that He loves us. Is it that He's unclear? I mean, what is it? Why do we have a difficult time embracing that particular thought. And you begin to realize, as you come to the Gospel of John, that the Gospel of John reminds us that this One who created all things, realizes that void. Something has to happen. He has to come and dwell among us. So, Scripture tells us in the word of God, the One who created everything became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld the glory of God. The glories of the only begotten full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) Those two words together really define the favor of God, the loving kindness of God, the compassion of God, the mercy of God and the validity of that. In other words, the truth tells us that you've got to know that this is something real. If in fact it's a facade or fake or insincere, disingenuous, hypocritical, you have no basis for any kind of truth in that. I mean, if somebody says that they love you and then by their very actions it shows something quite different, you walk away going, you know, I just

don't feel confident at all that they really even care for me. It doesn't matter what they say. It doesn't matter how many times they say it. There has to be this contact, this experiential touch. So, as 1 John starts off, he begins to reveal the veracity of this wonderful grace and the presence that he literally touched him.

The passage reads this way, as we read earlier, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—" (1 John 1:1)

Scripture is telling us once again that it has to be more than just words; it has to be something living and breathing and something that you can feel and something you can touch in a relationship. Because one of the great themes of the Gospel of John is that we've repeated it a number of times, but fundamentally, you don't believe what you see. You believe what you love. And so, John will begin to reveal this wonderful truth throughout the pages of the Gospel of John.

John 3:20-21. "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Right. Many of the Pharisees had an opportunity, they actually saw Lazarus come from the grave, but the realization that they would not accept the reality of somebody that they actually saw come out as a grave, because it says they love their acceptance in the synagogues rather than God. So, of course, as we end the Gospel of John, the question that's posed to Peter is not: do you believe me, but do you love Me? Because whatever you love is what you'll put your trust in, and you really won't love that which you can't rely on. So, the two are tied together, that is to say, the sense of grace and love and lovingkindness that is conveyed but there has to be the truth of it, and it has to be real, and it has to be something that you can feel, and you can touch.

You read of the disciples, and you have this guy by the name of Judas. In almost every case he's listed last with the disciples. Last, which the order begins to reveal to us as it goes on, the ones closest to Him. You have like Peter, James and John, but we see John, who is writing this, and he is the one that leaned against the Lord, and it was that sense of touch that meant a lot to him. Not only the fact that Jesus washed his feet and touched his feet. Not only the fact that he touched the nail prints of His hands, but that he leaned against Him and there was a relationship.

When I was growing up, my folks had a number of people come in that were involved in various kinds of ministry, and I remember one by the name of AJ Overton. I was just a little guy, and he'd come and preach, and we'd sometimes hear him on the radio. He was pretty much on the radio. I remember one of the first times that I was going to meet him, they said, "AJ, wants to meet you." and you know, as a kid, not too thrilled, another preacher, not too into that. You know, I was kind of resistant. I wanted to go outside and play. My dad says, "Just meet him. And

then you go out and play.” So, he comes, and he just starts being a kid with me. Wrestling with me, you know? I can remember wishing “Man, I wish AJ would come over.” And it would be a time. What drew me to him was we made contact. I know the world is telling you, “You can pull up something on a computer and you can be at church there.” It never was meant to be. It's a body supposed to touch.

Scripture says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (2 Corinthians 13:12)

How can you do that? It's impossible. So, the passage reveals the intimacy that comes. There's an amazing thing that can be realized oftentimes through a hug or a handshake, and by looking at somebody in the eye and seeing the genuineness of their heart. There's something about that that draws you to that person. That couldn't be done on the radio or couldn't be done if they talk to you over the phone, it has to be felt. And so, John says there's a reality here. And this is why Christ came. Because man still wasn't getting it, God was conveying it. He showed them, He brought them things, He revealed things to them, but He still had to come in the flesh. The fact that we beheld the glory of God, John is saying, “You can't walk away saying He doesn't love you, I saw Him on the cross. He loves me and He loves you.” And Peter will give you a second, “and He'll forgive you no matter what you do.” And how wonderful that is.

So, we come back to that wonderful truth, and we see the reality of it. And here again, it's the word made flesh. It's made real. These are words of life. And this is why you can't just read the Bible, can't just study the Bible. You have to actually apply it to your life. Because until you do, there's no veracity to it.

So, John begins to say in 1 John 1:2, “and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us —”

Once again, making reference to the fact that we partook of something real.

“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us,” (1 John 1:3)

So, fellowship actually comes from, and we talked about this last week, it has to be incarnate, it has to be in the flesh. It has to be something that we have a relationship with.

We now come to an interesting passage that talks about a joy, and as we've been looking at 1 John and coming to the realization that there has to be real fellowship in order for there to be real trust and in order for me to have confidence. If I can be with somebody, if I can have a relationship with somebody, if I can be close to somebody, I can walk away and you can ask me, “Do they love you?” And I can say “Yes, I know they love me.” So, what we're looking at in this is he keeps bringing us back into this fellowship.

In fact, as it ends in 1 John 1:3, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

In other words, it's something real. Christ is the truth, so it has to be something real. It has to be true. It has to be genuine. It has to be sincere. So, it's something real.

Now, 1 John 1:4 says, "These things we write..."

So, why are you telling me this, John?

"We write, so that our joy may be made complete."

Now, once again, the King James puts "your joy," which I would say to you, that they're inseparable, and that's one of the reasons why I put it in a title. This is a fellowship, inextricably tied. When I use the word inextricably, what we're talking about is something that is conjoined and completely indistinguishable. It's sort of like the Christmas lights that we pulled out from the attic, and my wife says, "We're not doing old Christmas lights anymore. We're going to buy new ones every year." I mean, we went for like 2 hours and still didn't unknot them. I said, "Let me just cut them." So, I cut half of them, and we got them out but that's a picture of inextricably tied because the fact of the matter is, I couldn't tell which one was which, and in many respects, that's exactly what he's saying within the passage. He says your joy and my joy are the same. If I could put it another way, wanting their good would be his good. It is, according to the Greek manuscripts, a first-person plural which is telling us our joy is made complete but it's not wrong to say "your joy" because of the fact that it is what he was seeking, and it is what brought him joy. It was their joy.

At Christmas time I think of early Christmases you go through with my folks who are now with me. Oftentimes we talk about Christmas in the past and things that we had done. My dad says, "Do you remember that time we got you the fire truck?" And it was a Christmas that I was sick, but I had enough energy to open a present and I still had enough energy to play with the truck and it was one of those that came with the truck, it came with the fire hat, with the light on it, and it came with something else but anyway it was the greatest present. It was one of the greatest presents that I could ever think of having and I remember looking at my parents and how they seemed to be so happy that I was enjoying it. I remember thinking that there is a great joy in receiving a gift, isn't there? It's an amazing thing that it was a joy I realized when I was young. I remember the time that my brother was opening like 20 presents, and I got some socks and, you know, a pair of pajamas, and I'm going, my brother always told me that they loved him more, but I never fully believed it until that moment. But anyway, long story short, they had my bike hidden at a neighbor's house and they pulled it out. My dad says, "I've always been sorry I did that to you, and it made you suffer so long." But there was a great joy in me receiving these things. I got married and I have a wife and I began to realize that I think I had greater joy giving her something at Christmas. Then you have kids, and you watch them open presents, and you go, wow, this is greater than anything else. That's greater than anything else. Giving to them somehow brings you more joy.

Throughout Scripture, John conveys this fundamental principle.

2 John 1:4. "I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth,"

"I was very glad." What brought him happiness? Well, seeing others walk in truth. And if you look at 3 John, he says something similar.

3 John 1:3-4. "For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

You know, it's one thing when you begin to walk in the truth of the word of God, but you begin to see those that you've invested your life in, and they begin doing it. It's like this is the greatest thing that could ever happen. I think of 1 Corinthians 4 and Paul writes to the Corinthians and as he's writing to them, he's making mention of the fact that they seem to have a lot of stuff and he doesn't seem to have hardly anything.

His point is, in 1 Corinthians 4:7-8. "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you."

You know, you shouldn't brag about it because you don't have anything that you didn't receive. I mean, obviously God gave that to you. And then verse eight, he says you're already filled. You become rich, you become like kings without us. And I'm glad. I want good for you, he says, "indeed, I wish that you had become kings."

But he says this in 1 Corinthians 4:9-10. "For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor."

In a similar way, he touches upon this in 2 Corinthians 4.

2 Corinthians 4:7-15. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,' we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."

There is something that happens when you and I receive the spirit of Christ within us. We take on His nature. John 15:11, Jesus speaks to his disciples, and He says, I came that you might have joy and that your joy will be made full. Do you remember when the next thing He said? "This is My commandment, that you love one another." The point of the passage is that it's impossible to have fullness of joy. The word that is used by John within the text, *plēroō* in the Greek, is making reference to the fact that you're filled up. You're lacking nothing. You're totally satisfied. And though the world might give you like a little buzz, you can have moments of elation, perhaps, by virtue of the fact that you got something that you want; It can't fill up the joy, it just can't. But I can tell you something that will. That which is selfless and sacrificial for someone else. As you begin to see them benefiting by your willingness to sacrifice. It couldn't be any better than this. That they would have all the blessings of God within them, and you realize that as Jesus goes on to say in John 15:13,

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Wow, that's an amazing text, isn't it? What He's talking about is a relationship and a relationship that's living. You can't mistake a love like that. Somebody lays down their life for you. Now what's amazing about this, and I have found this throughout my own life, that sacrifice brings me into a whole different kind of joy. The word that's used in the Greek within the passage is in reference to a calming effect of a joy. It's not somebody dancing around and celebrating; but it's kind of like a Mary in the Gospel of Luke where it says,

Luke 2:19, "But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart."

And you have that calming, quiet sense of joy inside of you. So, God gives you this sense of happiness and you feel fulfilled. Your life feels fulfilled.

I think of times in times of my life when I saw my kids loving giving to others and it just completed my life. Look, it's a lot of fun to see your kids' opening presents. That's a lot of fun; but when you see them open a present and give it to somebody else, something that they love, they give to somebody else. You go, man, I just don't think it could get any better than this. I just don't think it could be any more wonderful than this.

Hebrews 2:10 says, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."

To bring many sons to glory through sufferings.

Paul will write in Philippians 3:10, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..."

John 15:13. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

2 Corinthians 8:9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."

There's a tremendous amount of joy in that. But you know, there's no greater joy than to see your children feeling the same way, loving that deeply. How wonderful and encouraging it must be to God when he sees us willing to sacrifice for somebody else, willing to give for somebody else. I think of my children, and I think one of the things that has pleased me the most in thinking about them is I have one child that has adopted 2 orphans. I remember her, my daughter, coming up to me, "Dad, I was thinking, the other ones are pretty much grown up and I'm about ready to have some freedom. But..." she said, "The Lord just wouldn't let me leave them." Both of them were involved in homes that had a lot of addiction and drug addiction, and the parents were in prison or something like that. And I remember the latest that they've adopted, she goes, "She'd be brought to church by foster parents." and she said, "The Lord just gave us a connection." And she said, "I couldn't leave her." And you know, there's a thousand and one things that my daughter could have bought me, but nothing can match that gift. There is no greater joy than to see somebody walking in the love of Christ, and this is what John wants to convey. This made me full. When you were rejoicing in the same things, when you love the same thing. I've had one son give up higher positions so that he could be faithful in church. You couldn't give me any greater than that. Recently my oldest, we're asking him, "What do you want for Christmas?" It's usually not much of a surprise anymore. You know, you get to be about 42-43 and there are no more surprises, 44 but he said he said, "If you could do this for these people, that would be a great gift for me." And these things bring us joy, don't they? You want joy? You want fullness of joy? You start sacrificing for others, you start giving. There's a wonderful joy in getting I get that; but it's very fleeting. You start giving and you begin to see sparkles in other people's eyes. That's a wonderful thing. But you teach those that you love to give, it's a fullness of joy. And it's the reality of Christ in you. See, until that person begins sacrificing like Christ, the reality of Christ is not true in their lives. But once they start doing that, it's unmistakable, and it's one of the things that I just want to leave you. This particular passage in 1 John 3:13. We've read it before, but it's just good to remember it. He says this in verses 13-14,

"Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."

Now the difference is the world hates. How do we know? How do we have confidence that something real has happened in our life? Well, because you love the brethren. "He who does not love abides in death."

1 John 3:15-16. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to..."

This is where it gets real in our lives, right?

"We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Verse 17, "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

How can you say that there's a true existence of God in you? How can that be possible?

Verse 18, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

And when that begins to happen, it's obvious you're a child of God. Not only do you see the evidence of God's love for you; but you feel the love of God coming from you. God abides in me. And you'll know that you're His because you have the Spirit of Christ in you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your love for us that is never ceasing. Your mercies never come to an end. Lovingkindness from You is everlasting to everlasting, and we know that God so loved me. But to feel confident about that, I have to experience You in my life in a very real and tangible way. So, I come before You today saying, Lord, let your Spirit move within my life. Let me begin to work, breathe, walk in the spirit of Christ. That I might know that I'm Yours.

This is going to surprise you, brethren, but you're going to find that the more you sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven, the more joy you'll have. You'll have a confidence that the world cannot take away, as well as a peace. It's inexplicable, I know. Unfathomable, I know, but it's true. And so, these things have been written that we might have joy and that we might have fullness of it, lacking in nothing.