

**CHRISTIANITY** (*defined*)  
A Study of 1 John  
**“FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD”**  
**1 John 1:5-7**

Pastor David O. Dykes, Green Acres Church, Tyler, Texas, January 24, 2021

**INTRODUCTION:** Earlier in our worship service we sang a song about leaning on the everlasting arms. I have some funny childhood memories about that song. When I was about ten years old, I misbehaved in church almost every Sunday. At our house, Sunday lunch was often preceded by a spanking. I was best friends with the preacher’s son, Andy, and we were always cutting up.

Leaning on the everlasting arms was one of our cut-up songs. When we sang the chorus, we would put our arms each other’s shoulders and lean left and right as we sang, “Leaning, Leaning, safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.” To this day, I still find myself leaning when I sing it.

So I spend years thinking that song was about leaning on each other for support – and we should be able to lean on each other. But I was surprised when I finally paid attention to the words. It was talking about leaning on the arms of God. The first verse says: **“What a fellowship; what a joy divine; leaning on the everlasting arms.”** That’s referring to fellowship with God. The chorus says: **“Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms; leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.”** Elisha Hoffman was a Presbyterian preacher and he wrote that song a few years after the civil war. He got his inspiration from Deuteronomy 33:27 which says: **“The eternal God is our refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms.”** Did you pay attention to those words you sang? **“What have I to dread? What have I to fear? Leaning on the everlasting arms. I have blessedness with my Lord so near! Leaning on the everlasting arms.”**

This song is talking about the amazing honor that we have the ability to enjoy sweet fellowship with our Creator. That’s exactly what John was writing about in **1 John 1:5-7: This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no**

**darkness in him. If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.**

I mentioned last week that 1 John is a letter to the First Century Christians who were struggling to understand the basic beliefs of Christianity. We have all sixty-six books of the Bible to help us know what to believe and how to behave. Put yourselves in their sandals for a moment. A few of them were Jewish Christians, and they had a basic understanding of the Old Testament. But by the time this letter was written the vast majority of Christians were Gentiles and they had never heard of Moses and Abraham. They didn't have the rest of the New Testament like we have. So, the old Apostle focused on the basic truths about Christianity. For instance, in these three verses, we learn that we can have fellowship with God and that fellowship can be broken. And we learn three things about the nature of God.

**1. GOD IS LIGHT: This provides the basis of our fellowship.** John reminded the readers of one of the basic teachings that he had heard from the lips of Jesus. In verse five he wrote: **“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light...”**

The fact that we can enjoy fellowship with God is not based on who we are, but on who God is. He is light. The Bible doesn't say God HAS a light or that God is LIKE a light, but that God IS light. So what does it mean to understand that God is light? It involves at least two powerful truths about God.

**(1) Physically, light refers to God's glory.** Before the Universe was created there was only darkness and chaos. But God, who is light, introduced Himself into the darkness and said, “Let there be light!” And there was light. Then throughout the Old Testament, when God revealed Himself, it often involved light. The Jewish priests had a special word when the glory of God would fill the tabernacle or the temple. They called it the Shekinah glory of God. It was a word to describe the brilliant, flashing, radiating presence of God. When God called Moses,

He used a burning, glowing bush. When God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai there were flashes of lightning that engulfed the mountaintop in fire. And today, scholars believe they have found the real Mt. Sinai in Saudi Arabia and the top of the mountain is still charred black. Later, we the Jews built the tabernacle and made the sacrifice, the Bible says that fire fell from heaven and filled the Holy of Holies. And for forty years, God led the Israelites with a pillar of fire at night. And think about the morning Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Shepherds were out in the fields and angels appeared to them. The Bible says that the glory of the Lord shone around them. God's presence turned midnight into midday! God is light. So, that's why Jesus could claim, "I am the light of the world." Light is an amazing thing that's hard to understand. I'm not surprised that God chose light to express himself. When Albert Einstein was looking for a constant upon which to base his theory of relativity, he chose the speed of light. Light travels at 186,234 miles per second. If I could fire a pistol and the bullet traveled at the speed of light and hugged the curvature of the earth, it would penetrate my body six times in a second. Just as there is something mysterious about light, God has chosen that image to help us understand His majesty and power. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:15-16: **"God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen."** In the pure essence of His majesty, God is unapproachable – it would be like trying to fly into the sun. But through Jesus, He has invited us to experience fellowship with Him.

**(2) Morally, light refers to God's goodness.** In the Bible darkness represents evil and light represents goodness. Satan is called the Prince of Darkness. Jesus described hell as a place of outer darkness. Jesus said that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. There was a supernatural light at the birth of Jesus and there was a supernatural darkness at the death of Jesus. A few weeks ago we spoke

about the Magi who followed a star to seek the King of the Jews. This wasn't a real star or an alignment of planets because the Bible says that the light moved and stopped over the house where Jesus was. That was a supernatural expression of the presence of Holy God.

Fast forward thirty-three years. When Jesus was on the cross, He literally became sin for us. And in that moment, He experienced a sense of alienation from His Father. He said, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" And the Bible says darkness covered the land from noon until three o'clock. This wasn't an eclipse or a storm. You see, A Holy God can't look upon sin. The Bible says in Habakkuk 1:13, "**Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.**" So when Jesus bore my sin and your sin, God couldn't look on His son, so the light went out. But thank God, once Jesus had paid the price for our sin, the darkness lifted and Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit." That leads us into the second thing we learn about the nature of God.

**2. GOD IS HOLY: This is what makes possible the breaking of our fellowship.** One of the most puzzling realities that Christians have to deal with is "what happens when I sin?" We'll speak more about that in the next message, but in this passage, John introduced the possibility that a Christian can know the God who is light and then walk in darkness. In 1 John 1:5-6 we read, "**There is absolutely no darkness in him. If we say, "We have fellowship with him," and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.**"

I've known believers who have struggled with this problem for years. Many of them have come to me and said, "Pastor, I must not be saved because there is sin in my life. Was I ever saved in the first place? Do I need to be saved again?"

In order to understand this, I want us to focus on two words: Relationship and fellowship. In the Christian life, we have a relationship with God and we can have fellowship with God. The two are not the same and understanding the difference can help you become stronger in your faith.

**(1) RELATIONSHIP: Entering God’s family (your relationship with God is unbreakable).** We all have friends, some Catholics, some Assemblies of God, even Methodists who believe a person can be saved, and then lose their salvation. But we believe in the doctrine of eternal security. That means that once you are truly a child of God you can never do anything to change your status as a child of God. Some people call this, “Once saved; always saved.” But I don’t like that term because it breeds misunderstanding.

Through the years I’ve heard people say, “You Baptists believe ‘once saved always saved.’ If I believed that I’d go out and sin all I wanted to. They don’t understand salvation. If you have the attitude that you’re saved and you can sin all you want and get away with it – I doubt you are saved in the first place.

Jesus said in John 10:28: **“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”**

I believe once you’re born into the family of God, that relationship can never be broken. But now I want us to focus on the second word – FELLOWSHIP. And as we’re going to see in a moment, your fellowship with God can be disrupted.

**(2) FELLOWSHIP: Enjoying God’s favor (this is breakable).**

When we start walking in the darkness, our fellowship with God can be disrupted and broken. Let me give you an example from my family. I loved my dad and he loved me. We spent time fishing and he coached my baseball games. I was proud to be Orlo’s son and he was proud of me most of the time. But there were times when I didn’t honor my father because of some stupid decisions I made.

One weekend four or five of my buddies went out camping to hunt squirrels – and anything else that moved. That first night around the campfire, one of my buddies pulled out a bottle of clear liquid. I learned later it was moonshine. He took a swig and passed it around. I tilted it up and it was like fire was going down my throat. It was awful. But after I swallowed it, I croaked, “Man, that’s good stuff.”

Well, fast forward a few hours and we were all deathly sick and drunk. The next morning, we somehow managed to drive back into town and we all fell into bed. Of course, our parents soon learned the truth. I remember my dad talking to me about my behavior. I was too old to be spanked, but his look of disappointment was worse than a spanking. He told me how he and my mother were embarrassed by my behavior. I apologized and there was some kind of punishment I received. But the main consequence of my bad behavior was that I had disrupted the friendship and fellowship I had with my dad. I was still Orlo's boy – that hadn't changed, but I was out of favor with him for several weeks.

Next week I'll talk about how King David, who was a man after God's own heart, made some terrible decisions, and he lost fellowship with God. Later after he had confessed and repented of sin, he wrote a song that described how miserable he was when he was still hiding his sin.

**In Psalm 32:3-5, David sang, "When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. *Selah* Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin."**

Yes, God will forgive our sin and fellowship can be restored, but when we are walking in darkness, we are miserable. And the devil will use that time to accuse us.

I read a story that sheds light on this. Years ago, a little boy and girl went to visit their grandparents on the farm. The boy had a slingshot his granddad had made for him. One day he was shooting at the barn but couldn't hit it. He shot at a tree and couldn't hit the tree. He looked over at his grandmother's prize goose, pulled the slingshot back and WHAP! He hit the goose right in the head and killed it on the spot. Terrified, he didn't know what to do, so he did what most little boys would do—he dragged the goose into the woods and covered it up, figuring no one would know.

About that time his older sister walked out and said, “I saw what you did!” And he pleaded with her not to tell their grandmother. She said, “Then you’d better do what I say unless you want me to tell.”

That night they were at the dinner table and the grandfather said, “Tommy, would you like to go fishing tomorrow?” Tommy’s eyes lit up and he was about to say, “Sure!” But his older sister stared at him and said, “Tommy, you don’t really want to go fishing, do you? Wouldn’t you rather grandad take me fishing?” Tommy gritted his teeth and said, “No sir. I don’t want to go. Why don’t you take sis fishing tomorrow?” The next day, grandfather asked Tommy if he wanted to ride into town in his pickup truck. Before he could answer, his sister interrupted and said, “Tommy, you don’t want to ride to town, do you? You’d rather granddad took me. Right?” Again Tommy bit his tongue and said, “Sure, why don’t you go sis?”

This went on for several days until Tommy couldn’t stand it any longer. The fact that his sister had the knowledge of killing the goose was driving him crazy. So he stormed into the kitchen and said, “Grandma, I’m so sorry. I shot your goose with my slingshot and buried it. And my sister saw it and threatened to tell on me. I’m so sorry!”

His grandmother smiled and said, “Tommy, I was watching out the kitchen window when you shot that goose. And I have already forgiven you.”

Tommy said, “Well, why didn’t you say something sooner?” His grandmother said, “I just wanted to see how long you were going to let your sister make a fool out of you”

When you’re out of fellowship with God, the Devil has you right where he wants you. He accuses you and he abuses you. God has already forgiven you, so run to Him to confess your sin so you can enjoy His favor again. Relationship is eternal -it can’t be broken. But fellowship, where you enjoy the favor of God, can be disrupted by sin in our lives.

**3. GOD IS FORGIVING: The blessing of our fellowship.** When we walk in darkness, our fellowship with God is disrupted. But God is loving and forgiving and we read in 1 John 1:7: **“If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”**

There are two blessings we experience when we come to God to have our fellowship restored.

**(1) Walking with other believers.** John wrote that we have fellowship with one another. Our fellowship with each other is dependent on our fellowship with God and I believe if you're not right with God you cannot be right with your brother. And usually when somebody is not right with another Christian, you can make sure that one of those two believers is not right with God. Only when you walk in the light, fellowshiping with God, can you walk with each other.

The most glorious thing about this whole passage is that God desires to have us walking in fellowship with each other and in fellowship with Him. When I think of walking in fellowship with God, I think about the perfect fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God in the garden before sin destroyed their fellowship. They were thrown out of the Garden and lost their way.

So what does it mean to walk in the light as He is in the light? It means He guides us. There's a lot of darkness in this world, but we are called children of the light. He guides us with His Word. In Psalm 119:105 the Bible says: **"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path."**

**(2) Washed in the blood.** One of the greatest promises in the Bible is found in verse 5: **"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."** The Bible says, **"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin."** There is a scarlet thread of blood redemption that runs from Genesis to Revelation the Bible. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:18: **"For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb."**

I started this message talking about Elisha Hoffman who wrote the song, *"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms."* He wrote one other famous hymn that you will recognize. It's a song that's full of questions: **"Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in this grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?"** Are you washed; in the blood? In



**the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb; Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?"**

**CONCLUSION:** God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." But then He said, "You are the light of the world." Which one is it? Is Jesus the light, or are we? Yes. It's like the sun and moon. The sun generates light, but the moon is a cold dead rock. But when the moon reflects the light of the sun it can be so bright at night that you can see your shadow. Jesus is like the sun, and we are to reflect His light in a world full of darkness and death.

So what's the take-away? We must **SEE HIS LIGHT! BE HIS LIGHT!** The Bible says in Philippians 2:14-16: **"Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you SHINE LIKE STARS in the world, by holding firm to the word of life."**

How do we do this? Jesus said, **"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in Heaven."** As we continue to show acts of kindness in a hurting, dying world, we must make sure that we point people to God.

So believer, how is your FELLOWSHIP with God right now? Are you enjoying sweet fellowship with Him? If not, there may be a sinful attitude, or sinful habit in your life. Confess it and your fellowship with God can be restored.