

The Life: Personal Fellowship
I John 1:1-4

The New Testament letter we call "I John" was written to second and third generation believers in Christ. Like all churches, it was a church with "issues". A misunderstanding (in some) about the personal, foundational nature of Christianity - sharing Life together with Christ - led to confusion about sin, misconceptions about equality in the Body, and a loss of discernment regarding false teachers. As a result, they had become a rather fearful lot who needed to be shepherded back into the liberating, perfecting love of God (I Jo 4:18,19). Also, their "faith" had become quite "burdensome" (I Jo 5:1-5) and they needed to be re-directed back to the only foundation for rightness with God - a renewed sense of their permanent union, their eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, John's subject is made clear from the opening sentence - "the Word of Life" - Jesus Christ Himself! The starting point, the destiny, and everything in between concerning living life pleasing to God is always a Person - "the" Person of Jesus Christ the Lord. John calls Him "the Word of Life... the Life... the eternal life" before he ever uses a period in order to establish the foundation of all things Christian. He "manifests" -makes public - the Life which makes living full of life, the Life that enables us to fully and properly function according to the design of our Creator. His Life is nothing less than God's own Life in human flesh - constant, unfailing, lacking in nothing, eternal Life (Jo 3:16 life!).

The definite article adjective ("the") is crucial here - there is only one Saving Life, excluding all other possibilities. Jesus Christ alone is THE Source, Substance, and Supply of this Life for the human race. John testifies, "We've had our own personal encounter with Him. The real entry of His real Life into our real lives has made a real difference. And our joy would be fulfilled if you would believe and receive Him as well!"

John calls this real, personal encounter with Jesus Christ "fellowship." We belong to equally, we share in equitably... His Life. No one has any unfair advantages with God (pulling the rug out from under the Gnostics), no one is closer to God (a blow to the legalists). And, there is a double dimension to this fundamental truth:

- 1) We share Life in common with God - an indivisible, personal, eternal oneness with Father, Son, and Spirit (John 17:22), freely graced to any and all who by faith freely receive His amazing gift of "the Life". This fellowship was not earned by behaving... it is not taken away by misbehaving.
- 2) We share this Life in common with each other - "fellowship with us." (I Jo 1:3) The church is not a group of people with shared interests, goals, or doctrines - but a group of people who share Life together... His Life!

Which brings us to the stated reason for this letter - "Fellowship..." with God and with each other. A "union" that leads to "communion". Put simply, communion, fellowship, sharing life together is the reason for the rescue by Christ's Saving Life. Any church that forgets this will have all kinds of "issues"!

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Greetings

During our coronavirus containment days, Isaiah 56:12 seems to be quite applicable, "Tomorrow will be like today, only more so." For many of us, our daily routines are (momentarily, we hope!) so repetitive and predictable its hard to remember what day of the week it is! Without Tuesday lunch meetings, Wednesday groups, Friday night dinners out, Sunday church... well, you get the idea.

This has been particularly hard for many "church people." People whose "source" is the local church, whose "guide" is the current pastor, whose "goal" is to maintain the latest ministry programs. Don't get me wrong - I'm a "church guy" all the way. To be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into the church (see Bible study on other side!).







Nevertheless, the "Source", the "Guide", the "Goal" of everything that is... is a Person... God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I've been telling the past few generations of college students that, in a world where all the "fences" are coming down (of right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error), you better have an Indwelling Guide. And now, in a world where we are not able to meet together, to minister together, to worship together as we are used to doing, we better have an Indwelling Source!

In II Timothy 4:9-18, Paul is in prison (talk about containment!). He was bereft of personal support (v16), abandoned by Demas (v10), without books, paper, and

even a coat (v13), "burned" by Alexander (v14)... "deserted by all" (v16). "BUT"... but... but..." THE LORD STOOD WITH ME"... he was not without his "Source"! His "Goal" was unchanged - "that the Gentiles might hear" (v17) and "to Him be the glory," (v18)

So, to all of us, in a world where we are one coronavirus, one geo-political storm from not being able to "do church" as we know it, we better have an Indwelling Source and Goal! Externally, tomorrow after tomorrow may be the same... but, internally, we won't be! We will be being made different by "the Source, the Guide, the Goal of everything that is" (Ro 11:36).

Praise & Prayer

-  For our local fellowships to share His Life together
-  To make the most of our current time (Eph 5:16)
-  To live from our Indwelling Supply
-  For fellowship with God and His family
-  For our Indwelling Source, Guide, and Goal
-  For the opportunities for personal transformation