

1 John 1:1 - 2:6 **Reasons for Writing**

[1 Jn 1:5 And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.]

The apostles went about proclaiming the gospel. This one sentence is one of the best summaries of the gospel (the good news) contained in Scripture. That which is true and honorable and good exists; it is available. We need not settle for less.

As this letter unfolds, John will expand on the significance of saying, "We have heard from Him," as opposed to, "We thought this was a good idea." He will tell us more about the clear line between light and dark. With God, there are no shadows, no shades of gray.

That's an unusual concept for human beings. That is probably why it caused the early Christians so much trouble, and why it still causes trouble today. We are not accustomed to a black and white world.

In spelling, just when you think you have the spelling rules down, along comes a word that breaks all the rules. The same happens in chemistry and physics. Just when you think you have a nice, neat formula to explain how something works, along comes an event that doesn't fit into the formula. Or in law, just when we think we have a law that will be fair for everyone, we find someone who is hurt by it. In humans, there are lots of shades of gray. But in God, there is light, no shadows, no need for exceptions or compromises. That is the 'what' of John's message. But why? What are John's reasons for proclaiming this message?

I am certain that we could think of lots of good reasons why an apostle would proclaim the gospel. But let's investigate the whys that John gives. That is how this letter begins. Surrounding John's one sentence summary of the gospel [and this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.], he gives three reasons why he proclaims that message, three reasons that have much to say about the message itself, three reasons that we must keep before us if we are to understand this gospel and proclaim it.

John's first reason: that we may have fellowship. [1 Jn 1:1-3 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.]

John's first reason for proclaiming the gospel is so that we may have fellowship with other believers as we have a common fellowship with God.

That sounds wonderful, but what does it mean? Just what is fellowship? It's a partnership, but more than a business partner. It's a joint ownership, but more than a vested interest. It's an enjoyment of things held in common. In fact, this word, fellowship, is often used to describe the marriage relationship, and also to describe the sharing of earthly goods between Christians. Fellowship is to have so much in common that we share everything from possessions to time to feelings.

Isn't that what people really seek in this life? Someone with whom to have fellowship? John proclaims his gospel so that we may have fellowship. But on what basis? On this: As we

share all our time and goods and feelings with God, we end up having common interests with each other.

Notice that John does not say for us to hammer out compromises so we can finally reach a degree of fellowship. That's what nations do over disarmament. That's the basis of most marriages - those marriages that yield a 50% divorce rate - hammered out compromises that eventually fail. But, if we share ourselves with God, in whom there are no compromises, we can have fellowship between believers that never fails.

And notice on what that fellowship is built: that which has been seen, heard, touched, and handled. John's gospel is built on objective reality, not theory.

Have you ever looked up the word, faith, in the dictionary? In it you will find the common usage of that term. Most of the world defines faith as 'belief in something for which there is no proof.' That is not the kind of faith John wrote about. That dictionary definition of faith defines pagan faith, not Biblical faith. Biblical faith is based on evidence.

In science, we have theories, and we have experimental data. Theories are good for pointing us in a reasonable direction as we seek the truth. But, experiments are the proof of the theory. Many a fervently held theory has been proven wrong by experiment. From the shape of the solar system to the existence of atoms, lists of failed theories make for some entertaining and humorous reading. Now that experiments have proven them wrong, we laugh at ourselves for having ever believed such outrageous ideas.

John's point is that we can have fellowship based on the objective reality: what has been seen, heard, touched, and handled. Without that objective evidence, we are at the mercy of countless theories, one as good as another, or as worthless as another, because none could be proven either right or wrong.

Our fellowship is based on evidence. The facts lead us all in the same direction. Because we are all going in the same direction, we have fellowship.

That's what makes our fellowship different than any other. Other brands of fellowship are based on people deciding how much compromise each can endure for the sake of a flawed imitation of fellowship. That kind of fellowship starts with what I want and where I want to go.

John's fellowship has a completely different focus. We each must deal with the uncompromising light that is God. As we struggle to understand how to relate to that light, we notice others struggling to do the same. We have fellowship based on seeking God, not based on my perceived needs.

John proclaimed this message so people could have an unfailing fellowship.

John's second reason to proclaim the gospel is because sharing makes life complete.

[I Jn 1:4 And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.]

People search high and low to find that piece that seems to be missing from the jigsaw puzzle of their lives. John tells what it is. His joy was made complete by sharing the gospel with others. But that has not been the pattern Christians have followed over the centuries.

In early church history, we find the monastic movement: Christians withdrawing from the world in order to be closer to God. It didn't work. In fact, John predicted that their lives would be incomplete because they weren't sharing the gospel.

In more modern times, missionaries have gone to other cultures in order to share the gospel, but something was still incomplete, because they formed little islands of America in the middle of the jungle. They shared the gospel, but prevented fellowship.

John shared the gospel for fellowship and for making his own joy complete.

But, we say, I don't know how to share the gospel. I'm not a teacher. I can

't explain. Am I doomed to an incomplete life where there is always something missing?

No. John already has given the answer, back in the first three verses: what has been seen, heard, touched, and handled. Share the tangible. If you can give directions to your own house, if you can describe your own living room, you can share the gospel. Share the facts of Jesus life from the gospels. To share the gospel, you don't have to explain anything.

Some go to perverted lengths here. They share what I have heard, what I have seen, what I have touched and handled. But, I was not with Jesus like John was. What I feel or think, what I have experienced is irrelevant, not worth sharing, because it is a self-centered imitation of the gospel.

Instead, to make our lives complete, share the facts of the gospels. To those who desire to serve God, those examples of Jesus will become the common goal, through which we can have fellowship.

Discussions of theory, doctrines, rules, practices, or my personal experience with God may be entertaining to some (and discouraging to others), but John says that our joy will be made complete by sharing the facts about Jesus. That is where you will find fellowship.

A third reason to share the gospel is because sin can be defeated.

[I Jn 1:6-2:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and {yet} walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but 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. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for {those of} the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.]

"I am writing these things that you may not sin." This is the impossible dream.

But you noticed, I'm sure, that, although John wrote of "walking in the light" and "not sinning" in absolute terms, he followed up each one with "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves" and "if anyone sins, we have an advocate."

John says that sin can be defeated.

But, how would a soldier feel who got wounded 18 times, and was sent back to the front 18 times? That's how people feel about sin. I go out and do battle, and I get hurt, maybe a little, maybe very painfully. So, I rush to the doctor. Healing occurs. But after a while, wouldn't you get a little gun shy?

It's all in how you look at it. If all I think about is the possible, even probable, pain, I'll get gun shy about battling sin and give up, and the battle is lost. That happens a lot.

But what if we adopt a different attitude? It may hurt when we get wounded by sin, but we have the best doctor in the universe. He never loses a patient. And the pain doesn't last too long. And isn't that the bottom line of the fear of pain: that it will get worse, or not stop, or kill us? If we have the guarantee that it won't hurt very long, and it won't be fatal, we can handle it,

much like a trip to the dentist, or getting a shot from the doctor, or going to the weight room: no pain, no gain.

Defeating sin is only one of the impossible dreams. But impossible dreams have this way of coming true. And then, those who used to just talk about that impossible dream have to do something about it, or be shown to be a liar.

When I was little, going to the moon was an impossible dream. There was this hint of possibility because a satellite had been orbited successfully. I remember John Glenn's flight: America's first man in space: the impossible dream was drawing closer.

Back then, lots of people made the news by volunteering to be on the first passenger craft to the moon. They thought it would be exciting. But it was only an impossible dream.

But now, after putting men on the moon, after the Challenger disaster, you don't find so many people volunteering, except those who have counted the cost of accomplishing that dream.

Some people talk a good game about defeating sin and loving God. John says that those who do not confess their sin, and those who do not keep His commandments "are liars and the truth is not in them." The proof is in the doing. "By this we know we are in Him," if we do as He did.

Sin that is confessed, God forgives. But if we say, "I can't," if we speak of the love of God but do not get up and do what God says, John says that we do not know God. The world calls it a lack of self discipline. John calls it making God a liar.

John proclaimed an impossible gospel, one about which there have been many theories, arguments, even wars. If we will know why John proclaimed it, we will know what we need to say. We have a foundation for fellowship based on facts, not philosophy or feelings. We have a fellowship based on a common goal, not you giving in to me or me giving in to you, but both being molded to the one perfect image. He proclaimed this good news to make up that one last piece for a life of joy. Sharing the gospel makes life a joy. And, finally, he proclaimed the gospel so that sin could be defeated. We know we have achieved the impossible dream if we walk in the same manner as He walked.