

***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— <sup>2</sup> the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— <sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:1-4, NKJV).***



The epistles of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John were written in about 85-90 AD, Jesus had now been gone from earth for about 50 years. People had begun to make up all sorts of theories about who Jesus really had been and what He had really done. Some said he never had really come as a human being or really been anything physical in any way. They said he was sort of like a ghost or an apparition. Some said he really wasn't divine, but was an agent of God. It seems no matter what the time period in history, people try to change Who the

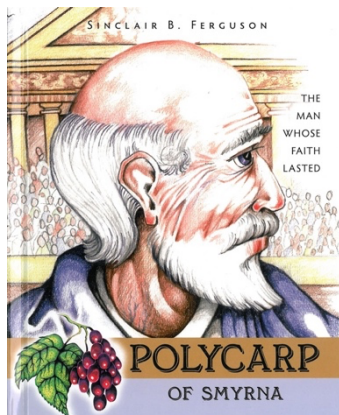
Bible says that Jesus was.

John was now an old man and he saw things changing. He was addressing that tendency for the thinking of the day to sneak in and corrupt what the pure meat of the Word says. Paul had warned about this and talked about this in his letter to the Colossians.

*<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Colossians 2:8-10, ESV).*

Look how Paul puts the reality of Christ right out there in the front and is absolutely clear about Who Jesus was. "FOR IN HIM THE WHOLE FULLNESS OF DEITY DWELLS BODILY." Paul is saying that Jesus was FULLY GOD and He dwelt in the BODY OF A MAN. Stuff gets made up by all kinds of people and gets added to simple Christianity. More often than not, they rely on some experience they've had instead of looking to see what the Bible says about Jesus. We should never take experience and exalt it over the pure Word of God. So, in these letters, John is answering some of these false teachers.

Some were denying that Jesus had come in human flesh because they reasoned that the flesh was evil. These were called “Gnostics.” That just comes from the Greek word meaning “know.” They felt THEY were in the KNOW and others weren’t privy to some real truth that only they knew. Don’t you see? That attitude is centered in self and in pride. There are still groups of Christians that think they have a corner on the truth that others are just not seeing.



Some of these Gnostics were so focused on spirit instead of body that they reasoned they could serve God spiritually and that it didn’t really matter what their bodies engaged in. John is going to call them out and remind them that such conduct is just sin. There are still groups of Christians that arise that promote an idea that we as believers can live in “sinless perfection.” It is a sweet thought but it very dangerous. Why do I say that? Because the Bible tells us that even though we are redeemed as Christians, we will still struggle with what is called the old sin nature, the sin dna, the old man, or the flesh. To walk in that holiness and godly living that Peter talked about, takes a a choice to walk in the Spirit instead of walking in the flesh. John in part is talking to these “sin deniers.” In this book, John is also talking to believers about the kinds of lives that they’re living and how that affects their relationship with the Lord and with one another. A few years ago, I stumbled across the study notes of a scholar named Dr. Thomas Constable.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Constable did a pretty incredible commentary of the entire Bible. I find it to be very orthodox and sound. He summarizes the Book of 1 John saying, “It would not be inappropriate to write over this epistle as a whole, **THE GATEWAY TO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.**”

A deep walk with Jesus is indeed about fellowship. A deep meaningful relationship with other believers is also a mark of a healthy Christian community. John saw obedience as loving God and loving people. That pretty much is what Jesus Himself said when he told the inquisitive lawyer what exactly was the GREATEST COMMANDMENT. The website ministry named GotQuestions.org has a great summary of the book of 1 John as well. We read:

**Practical Application:** The Book of 1 John is a book of love and joy. It explains the fellowship we have with others and with Jesus Christ. It differentiates between happiness, which is temporary and fleeting, and true joy, which 1 John tells us how to achieve. If we take the words written by John and we apply them to our daily lives, the true love, commitment, fellowship, and joy we long for will be ours.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-John.html>

Church fathers write that as John grew older, he would come into the congregations and would say, “little children, love one another.” In these books John is going to talk in detail about how a person is changed when they come into a deep relationship of fellowship with Jesus.

This letter has no opening address like we’ve been seeing in the writings of Paul. There is no mention even of who the author is, but we are almost certain that it was John. It reads like the Gospel of John which also doesn’t bear John’s name as the author. So how do we know who wrote this? Well, we know that John had a young disciple named Polycarp.



We also know that Polycarp had a disciple named Irenaeus (see icon of Irenaeus to the left). Irenaeus tells us that he was told that John had written the Gospel of John as well as these epistles and the Book of Revelation.

These epistles are addressed to Christians. It doesn’t have systematic theology like Romans. It is more of a warning against the dangers of false teachings. In addition, it has a lot of encouragement and just different kinds of advice about how to maintain fellowship with God and one another.

John felt that certain teachings were dangerous and were invading the church. The damage was coming from within. It wasn’t from outside, rather it was heretical teachings by those who thought they could improve on God’s Word. The reason they were trying to do this is because they were trying to make Christianity a little more intellectually acceptable. This is still going on. There are those who come along and try to make Christianity way more complicated than it is.

***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life- (1John 1:1, NKJV).***

John is an eye witness of Jesus. He walked with Him. He talked with Him. He loved Him, and as he often reminds us, Jesus loved him. He tells us: “that which was from the beginning.” Jesus was and is God. He was there at creation, and He was there before time began. It is important to remember that to God time doesn’t even exist. I suppose you could say that what we call the past, present, and future are all occurring at the same time. John is an eyewitness telling us that “we (he and other believers and witnesses) heard Jesus with their own ears. They saw Him with their own eyes. And the Greek *etheasametha* says we “gazed upon Him.” We “looked on Him intently.” He goes on to say “and our hands handled Him.” John is telling the audience that Jesus was

real. He was physical. He was human. They saw Him, heard Him, and they touched Him.

Let's stop for a minute and focus on why it is so important to establish that Jesus is God in bodily form. What's so important about Him being all human as well as all God?

John said the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us." It was important that Jesus was a human being. He suffered as a man, died on the cross and rose again for us. Isaiah 53 says the Messiah was a human suffering servant. The writer of Hebrews says "he suffered in all manner as to us..." That's why we can relate to Him and He to us.

*<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16, NKJV).*

In His omniscience, God knew all about humans, but when He became man as Jesus, God had experiential knowledge of what it meant to be a human. He knows in every detail what we feel. Dr. House explains, "God cannot experience what He doesn't experience. And that's what He did in reference to His humanity in Jesus. HE KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS TO HURT, SWEAT, ETC. IN THAT HUMANITY HE SUFFERS AND DIES. And even in His humanness on the night before His crucifixion, He asked, 'CAN THIS BE TAKEN FROM ME?'"

HE AS A HUMAN ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND SO CAN WE. WE WILL RISE IN THE SAME BODY IN WHICH WE WILL DIE. WE WILL JUST HAVE NEW PROPERTIES. Jesus rose in the same body in which He died, but now it has new properties.

God is saying through John that Jesus was from the beginning. This is exactly like John begins his gospel account, saying, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God.<sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3, NKJV).*

I just want to pause to say these words refute every cult that says that Jesus is less than God and that He was a created being. This would include Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even Islam and many others. The text clearly says, "ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANYTHING MADE THAT WAS MADE". This is a big deal.

Have fellowship with you... John refers to an intimate spiritual connectedness when we're born again into the family of God. It is when we're spiritually connected to one another and we know that we're family.

***<sup>5</sup> This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7, NKJV).***

God is good. He is light. There is no darkness in Him at all. John is saying that if we are truly walking in the light, we understand that we are sinners saved by grace. He is telling the Gnostics that when we walk in darkness, we deny that we still have struggles with sin. They denied that saying they had no sin because their spirits were perfected in Christ and what their bodies did, did not matter. John says that this is “walking in darkness.” It is lying and not practicing the truth.

When we “walk in the light as He is in the light, we are able to have sweet fellowship with one another.” I think one reason it is so sweet, is that when I realize that you are a work in progress and that God isn’t done with you yet, I’m going to be a lot more patient with you. And when you realize that I’m a work in progress and God isn’t done with me yet, you’ll be a lot more patient with me. Remember, I’m not talking about your justification and sanctification for the salvation of your soul. They are complete, but your walking in holiness and godliness is not complete. Both Peter and Paul made that very clear. It will go on till you take your last breath. I’m talking about what is traditionally called your progressive sanctification and the renewal of your mind as you step out of the way, letting go, and letting God have His way with you.

So why does this difference of opinion affect fellowship? When there is an openness to the fact that I mess up and you mess up, we can have spiritual intimacy. IF someone is sinning and denies it, the intimacy ends. You can’t stand to be around that person. They might mistreat you, ignore you, and even have abusive behavior toward you, and all the while they think they’re walking in the light. If we walk in the light (acknowledging that we don’t always walk in purity) the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all impurity. It CLEANSSES us from all sin. The word is in the present tense in Greek. It is ongoing. Remember, God is not bound in time. The blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin as we walk in the light. So, child of God, I urge you today, to walk in the light.

So, back to the practical application: You are not perfect, but Jesus’ blood washes you from sin and you must treat others with the same deference. This brings us into sweet fellowship with Him and them. If we apply these words to our daily lives, the true love, commitment, fellowship, and joy we long for will be ours.<sup>3</sup>

Let us pray.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-John.html>

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.