

I John
The Apostles' Proclamation (Part 3)
I John 1:1-4
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This morning, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn back with me to I John as we now pick up our study of that, and we will continue over the next number of weeks to march through this letter. I also should tell you that you can relax; I'm not going to spend this long on every passage in this book. But as we set it up, as we see the prologue, as we see John explaining himself to us, it's important for us to really get our arms around this because it really serves as the foundation for everything else that we'll learn.

Many of you have had the opportunity to either read the book or to see the movie that was based on the book, the book by J. R. Tolkien, [The Fellowship of the Ring](#). In that book, Tolkien uses the word 'fellowship' in a distinct way. He wasn't talking about coffee and doughnuts. Instead, he uses the word 'fellowship' to refer to a group of people who have come together to share or participate in something. That small group who bound themselves with Frodo Baggins to destroy the ring of power, they were partners, they were joined in a relationship, united by a common purpose or goal, they were in the Fellowship of the Ring. That is exactly how the New Testament uses the word 'fellowship;' it's how Paul uses the word 'fellowship,' based on the Greek word '[koinonia](#),' and it's how John uses the word 'fellowship' here in the prologue to his first letter as he describes the purpose for his writing this letter to those who originally received it, as well as through the Holy Spirit to us.

Let's read again the prologue, I John, chapter 1, I'll read verses 1 to 4:

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--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--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. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

As we've discovered, the basic idea of this prologue is this, the ultimate foundation of our fellowship with God, our assurance of eternal life, and our joy, is the Apostolic Proclamation of the Gospel. That's the foundation for everything.

Now, this paragraph is a bit complicated as I've noted for you. It consists of two sentences. The second sentence is just verse 4; it's pretty simple and straightforward as we'll see later this morning. But verses 1 to 3, is a long, difficult sentence. Now, just to remind you, the subject and the verb of that sentence are in verse 3, "...we proclaim." What exactly did the Apostles proclaim? Well, the direct object of the verb 'proclaim' is back in verse 1, the four phrases in verse 1. Here's what we proclaim, John says, "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." And then in the last phrase there in verse 1, John identifies the one that those phrases describe, the person who is at the center of the Apostles' Proclamation. Notice that phrase at the end of verse 1, their message, their proclamation was, "concerning (or about) the Word of Life--."

Now, verse 2, you'll notice, is set off by dashes in our Bible, in dashes, and that means it's parenthetical. In verse 2, he's just explaining how the Twelve, the Apostles, came to hear and to see and to look at and touch the eternal Son of God; it was through the incarnation. He was manifested in the flesh.

Then verses 3 and 4 go on to explain the reasons for the Apostles' Proclamation and the reasons for John's letter. So, as I've noted for you then, the prologue points out for us three key features of the Apostles' Proclamation. We've already examined "The Focus of Their Proclamation," it was Jesus Christ. And in the first 3 verses, John explains several crucial truths about Jesus, our Lord. I'm not going to explain these; I'll just recite them, but we learned in those verses that He existed eternally, that He is truly human, that He is God's self-expression, that He Himself is self-existent, and He gives life to everything and everyone. But He, the eternal Son of God, was manifested in the flesh, and yet He was eternally with God and who is this person? He is Jesus of Nazareth, and He is the promised Messiah and Savior. All of that in the first three verses, and that, folks, is the foundation for everything for us as believers.

Now last time, we went back to these three verses because there's another thread of thought, another feature that weaves through these verses, and it has to do with "The Integrity of the Apostles' Proclamation," the integrity of the Apostles' Proclamation. John here makes it clear that he and the other Apostles were, in fact, reporting historical events, and they were first-hand eyewitnesses. You see the stress of that in the first verses, "We saw, we touched, we heard."

But they weren't just first-hand eyewitnesses, they were official witnesses. Jesus, as we noted, chose them intentionally as the ones who would witness all that He taught and did. And they were, in the end, His legal representatives. Not only were they official witnesses, but He made them proxies, He made them His legal representatives to take His life and message and represent Him in declaring it to others. So, that is what we've seen so far.

That brings us today to a third feature of the Apostles' message, and that is 'The Purpose of the Apostles' Proclamation,' the purpose of the Apostles' Proclamation. John writes this letter with two basic purposes in mind, and they are the same purposes for the Apostles' Proclamation. Let's look at the purposes together. The first purpose is "The Assurance of Our Fellowship," the assurance of our fellowship.

Now again, just to remind you of the structure, John interrupted this complicated sentence with verse 2, in a parenthetical thought. And so, as he begins verse 3, he picks up where he left off in verse 1, and sort of summarizes verse 1 for us. So, notice how he begins verse 3, "what we have seen and heard (That is, what I described in verse 1, that is what) we proclaim to you also."

Now, he then introduces his first purpose for writing as he goes on in verse 3, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that (Notice the purpose word; here's the reason for this.) so that you too (my readers) may have fellowship." Now, obviously 'fellowship' is the key word, so we need to define that word. But before we do that, let me start by just making sure you know what fellowship is not. Let's sort of clear the decks here a bit because there is a lot of fuzzy, vague thinking about what John is meaning here.

Fellowship is not a mystical experience. We live in a Christian world that is overrun with emotional sentimentality and sort of feeling oriented. Fellowship is not an emotional awareness of, or sense of, or feeling of God's presence. How do I know that? Well, notice he says that he and the Apostles have fellowship with the believers to whom he writes in verse 3. Now, do you think that was mystical and emotional? No, of course not! The nature of our fellowship with God in Jesus Christ is the same as the nature of our fellowship with other believers.

Also, and we'll see this when we get there, Lord willing, next week in verse 7, we learn that all believers, without exception, already have fellowship with God, regardless of how they feel or the intensity of their experience. So, it's important for us to root out of our minds all un-biblical ideas about the nature of our fellowship with God. Now, how did things get so fuzzy? Well, about 150 years ago, a movement was born in Christianity called "The Higher or Deeper Life Movement." And I suspect almost every person in this room has been influenced by that bad thinking and bad theology; I certainly was.

Shortly after I was converted in the 1970's, I was introduced to a number of books that promoted this idea that there are two ideas with the higher deeper life. The first idea is kind of a second work of grace; you know, just like you got saved, at some point, you need this other dramatic experience that ushers you into a victorious life. That's a lie, OK? I've talked about that in sanctification, don't buy into that idea. Spiritual growth is like physical growth, it is slow, gradual, and painful.

The other idea that goes along with this higher deeper life is the one that specifically I want to mention, and that is, with that flawed view of sanctification also came a sort of feeling-oriented, experiential version of Christianity. In other words, if you were really spiritual, you didn't just believe certain things and live by faith in those things, you experienced God, you felt God, you sensed God's presence everywhere you went, and that's what you should pursue, that's what you should desire this idea said. I read books by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. I read books about abiding in Christ that were all about seeking a feeling or this sense of communion with God. Folks, let me just tell you those ideas are spiritually destructive. If you've been influenced by them, clear the decks of your thinking about what it means to have a relationship with God, and I hope to do that in the rest of this message. That's not what John means by fellowship.

Fellowship, in the prologue and in this first chapter, is not primarily something subjective that you feel; it's something objective that's real, whether you feel it or not. So what fellowship is is the next thing that should occupy our thoughts, what exactly is this? Well, the Greek word translated 'fellowship,' as I mentioned, is the word 'koinonia.' It comes from another Greek word, 'koinos.' It's a word that simply means 'common.' In fact, we talk about the Greek of the New Testament as 'koine' Greek, meaning it's common Greek, everyday marketplace Greek, not some educated academic Greek. And so, it simply means common, and so it came to refer 'to things held in common' like the common ownership of a business, or the common property of a married couple.

For example, in Luke 5, verse 10, we read that James and John, the two disciples, were partners with Simon. The word 'partners' is the word *'koinos.'* The leading Greek lexicon of the New Testament Greek language defines fellowship this way, "It is a close association involving mutual interests and sharing; it is a close relationship." Let me read that again. "It is a close association involving mutual interests and sharing; it is a close relationship." So, fellowship then, is participation, it is partnership or I think a good word often is the word 'relationship.' It is a new shared relationship that we entered at salvation.

So, here's the key question, "What is the nature of that relationship?" Well, there are two parts of it and John makes this very clear. At salvation, every believer becomes a child of God; we collectively, all Christians, are children of God. Look at chapter 3, verse 1:

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; (Every believer is a child of God.) and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God.

At the moment of salvation, we became children of God.

Go down to verse 10, you can see the contrast, "By this the children of God and (Watch this.) the children of the devil are obvious." So, what were you, what was I before we came to Christ? We were children of the devil. Jesus says the same thing. Right? In John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." But at the moment of your salvation, all of us who trust in Christ, we became together children of God. We entered into the fellowship, we entered into this new relationship.

A second part of this is, at salvation, all Christians became our brothers and sisters in Christ. So, we became children of God, go down to chapter 3, verse 14, “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.” Now, in context, who are the brethren? Well, go back to the verse 10, just a moment ago, those who are, collectively, with us now, “children of God” and no longer “children of the devil.” So, we've entered into this new relationship where we have brothers and sisters. Verse 15:

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 lay down our lives for the brethren.

Then he goes on to say and he gets really practical, “So, is somebody, one of your brothers or sisters in Christ in need? Well, act to meet that need.”

Go over to chapter 5, verse 1. This verse is so rich in theology, and we'll get there when we get there, but he says, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah (literally) has been born of God.” Regeneration precedes faith; you were born again before you believed because that's the only way the Spirit could enable you to believe. And then it says, “...whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.” You see the connection? We became children of God. Well, you didn't become an individual child of God in the sense that you have no obligation to anybody else; you became one of the children of God; and therefore, you not only have a new relationship to the Father; you have a new relationship to the people who are also born of God. They are your brothers and sisters in Christ. So, go back then to chapter 1, and what you need to realize is that here in I John 1, to have fellowship is not mystical; it's to know the reality of, to have confidence in, and enjoy the benefits of those new relationships.

Now, this new fellowship that we've entered into, this new partnership, this new set of relationships, has two expressions. First of all, we have fellowship or relationship with the Apostles and all believers. Notice verse 3, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship (Notice this.) with us (with us)."

One commentator on I John, Burdick, writes this, "I John describes a fellowship based on a common faith in the incarnate Son of God; because of that faith held in common, the believers are participants in a common interpersonal relationship with one another." That's what he's saying. When we believe, when we believe the witness of Jesus's official representatives, when we believe His legal proxies, when we believe the message of the Apostles and the gospel they brought, when we believe, we enter into the same fellowship that the Apostles enjoyed with each other, and that they enjoyed with other Christians. The moment you believe, you're in the fellowship; not the Fellowship of the Ring, you're in the Fellowship of the Gospel as Philippians 1 puts it. If we pass the tests in this letter, then we belong to the body of Christ just as surely as the Apostles themselves did and those first century believers.

In fact, look over at chapter 2; I John 2, and verse 19, when I was introducing this letter to you, I pointed this verse out as very important in this letter because he's dealing with those who used to be attached to the churches that he ministered to, but who believed the false teachers and left.

Verse 19, "They went out (Notice this.) from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they are not of us." Notice that "of us." In other words, every true believer, every person who

believes the true gospel is “of us,” in the fellowship with other believers, true members of Christ's body and of His church.

That, by the way, is what you have in Acts, chapter 2, you remember, after the day of Pentecost and after the message there and they repented and believed. Acts 2:41 says, “...those who had received (Peter's message) were baptized; and that day there were (What?) added to the church about three thousand souls.” You see, they came into the fellowship; they believed, and they came into the fellowship of believers and then it says this, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching (And literally the Greek text says.) and to the fellowship.” Not to fellowship, coffee and doughnuts, but to the fellowship. They had entered the fellowship. At salvation, we enter fellowship with all believers just as truly as we enter into fellowship with God.

By the way, can I just say this is such a powerful rebuke on so much of pop Christianity that focuses entirely on a person's personal relationship to God without any sense of an individual Christian’s belonging to, or obligation to the church and the larger Body of Christ? Let me just say that the New Testament knows nothing of a genuine believer who is unattached to and uninvolved with a local body of believers. If you're a Christian nomad who just wanders into this church or another church and you don't belong, you haven't really attached, you haven't invested yourself in the lives of these people, then you're sinning against Jesus Christ; you're sinning against His Body. You are in the fellowship; how can you ignore your brothers and sisters in Christ? Our fellowship is with one another, and John wants us to know that we have that fellowship.

But secondly, we have a fellowship or relationship with the Father and His Son; we have a fellowship with the Father and His Son. Verse 3, goes on to say, "...and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Now, I think by "our" there, John means not just his or the Apostles, but our, collectively, all of us who were in the fellowship, we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Now, this is the foundation of all true fellowship with other believers. It begins by having fellowship with God.

Now, first of all, notice the way John constructs this sentence. He intentionally points to two realities regarding the relationship of the Father and the Son. First of all, there is a distinction between them; they are two separate persons. Notice he says, "...our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," two distinct persons. But he also stresses the equality of the Father and the Son, they are on a parallel plane. They are two persons but entirely equal. Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son.

Now, let's take this apart a little bit. When it comes to our fellowship with the Father and His Son, there are a couple of points that are stressed here. First of all, we need to know that we have a relationship with God as Father and His Son as Savior and Lord. We need to know, that's the key word. We need to know that we have a relationship with God as Father and His Son as Savior and Lord. The only place that John uses the Greek word translated 'fellowship' is here in this chapter. Clearly, in this chapter, fellowship is something that every true Christian already has with God.

There are two ways we know that. First of all, the verb tense of verse 3, notice how it's put, "...we have...fellowship," we have fellowship. The Greek word translated 'have' here is put in a very important tense. It's not a tense, or a construction that would mean, 'so that you might have.' In other words, it wasn't like, 'you don't have this, but I'm writing so that you might come to have it,' that's not how it's structured. Instead, he uses the present tense which means, 'you are having fellowship, and I want you to know and experience the fullness of that reality.' In fact, as I've pointed out to you down in verse 6 of chapter 1, he says:

If we say that we (are having) fellowship with (God) 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 (are having) fellowship.

So, notice if you're a true Christian, you are having fellowship with God. That's a reality. So, back in verse 3, fellowship is something that every Christian enjoys already because he has entered a relationship with God; he's in the fellowship.

But what does it mean to have fellowship or relationship with God and with His Son? It means that we have come to know God as our Father and His Son as our Savior and Lord. You remember in John's Gospel, in chapter 17, verse 3, in the high priestly prayer, our Lord is praying, and He says this, "This is eternal life." In other words, if you've got eternal life, this is a reality. "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the...true God, and Jesus Christ whom You...sent."

Now, let me show you how John develops this idea here in his gospel. Let me show you how fellowship with God is something objective; it talks about the nature of our relationship with

Him. So, get your fingers ready and keep your minds fresh; I'm just going to briefly walk through; we'll see this unfold as we teach through this book, but let me just show you how often this comes up.

So, here we go. Start at chapter 2, verse 3, and I just want you to notice the way it's put. "We have come to know Him," that's what it means to have fellowship. Verse 5, "...we are in Him," that is in Christ, inseparably united to Him, He's now our legal representative. Look at chapter 2, verses 13 and 14, "...you know Him." Go back to verse 12, notice that the prerequisite for coming to know God is the forgiveness of our sins. Look down at chapter 2, verse 23, "... (you) have the Father." Verse 27, "...you abide in Him." The word 'abide' simply means 'to remain, to stay.' Remember those who left? You remain, you keep on believing. Verse 29, "... (we are) born of Him." Chapter 3, verse 1, "...we (are the) children of God." Chapter 3, verse 15, "... (we have) eternal life abiding in us." Chapter 3, verse 24, "...He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." We have the Holy Spirit in us. Verse 7 of chapter 4, believers have been "born of God and know God." Chapter 4, verse 12, "God abides in us" through His Spirit." Chapter 4, verse 13, "...we abide in Him and He in us...He has given us His Spirit." Verse 15, "God abides in (the believer and the believer) abides in (God)," remains, stays. Verse 16, "...the one who...loves...abides in God, and God abides in him." Chapter 5, verse 1, "(A believer) is born of God...and loves the Father." Chapter 5, verse 11, "...God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Verse 13, "... (believers) have eternal life." Verse 19, "We know that we are of God." Verse 20, "...we...know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Now, what I want you to see, folks, is that if you have believed in Jesus, you know God, and you know Him as Father. You have been born of God, you've experienced the new birth, you're now His child, and you know His Son as Savior and Lord. You have fellowship with God; it's already a reality. It became a reality the day that you were born again, the day that you trusted in Jesus Christ.

Now, why is this important? Because if you take that concept of fellowship and you make it mushy and sentimental and something subjective, then this Book is not going to be the comfort that the Lord intends it to be to your life because you're always going to have this, "Well, I don't feel enough." It's never going to be satisfying; it's as good as your feelings at the moment, as good as your emotions of the moment.

Instead, we have to live by faith, we have to believe what God has revealed, what He says. John writes this letter, not so we can have a subjective experience that we lack, but so that we can enjoy the assurance of an objective relationship that we already have. Back in chapter 1, verse 3, John tells us that he writes this letter so that we can grow in our knowledge of and our confidence in this fellowship, or this relationship that we already have with the Father and His Son.

And if you doubt this, he comes back to reiterate this same purpose for his writing at the end. Go to chapter 5, verse 13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." And verse 14, so that you have confidence before God, so that you know. Verse 15, He's your 'Abba,' He's your Father who

hears you when you call out to Him. That's why he wrote this letter. We need to know, folks, you need to know that you have a relationship with God as Father and with His Son as Savior and Lord. And it's not something tied to your feelings; it's tied to the fact, have you been born again, have you been changed by the Spirit of God, and have you believed in His Son, Jesus Christ? The moment you believed you entered the fellowship; the fellowship with other believers, and you entered the fellowship with God as your Father and with Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Now, we need to know that we have a relationship with God as Father and His Son as Savior and Lord, and there's a second sort of part or expression of this in John's thinking, and that is we need to grow in the depth of our relationship with God. So, we need to know that we have this relationship, and we need to grow in the depth of that relationship. And, while that's not the primary thrust of John's letter, it certainly is something that's a concern to him.

You can see both of these senses in I John, chapter 2. Look at it with me, I John 2, verses 12 to 14, and there's so much here, I'm not going to spoil all of it for you now, I'm going to get there, well, relatively soon. But I want you to see, first of all, in these verses, he talks about having a relationship with God as your Father, verse 13, "...I have written to you, children, because you know the Father." In other words, you now know God, you've entered into that relationship, you've entered into the fellowship because you've believed, you've come to know Christ.

But also, in the same paragraph, he talks about growing in our experience of our relationship to God. Notice the beginning of verse 13, "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him

who has been from the beginning.” That is, those who are spiritually mature; you not only know God, know Him as Father, but you have known him in the fuller sense of that expression. Verse 14, he says the same thing, “I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.” You don't just know that He's your Father, you've come to know, in a fuller way, who He is. We need to not only have that relationship, but we need to foster growing in that relationship with God.

Colossians 1:10, Paul writes, “...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work (And listen to this.) and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Or, 2 Peter 3:18, “...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” So, grow in your knowledge of the Father; grow in your knowledge of the Son.

But what does it mean to grow in the depth of our relationship with God and His Son? Again, folks, this is not something mystical, this is not something you feel. By the way, I'm not discounting emotion. Of course, emotion is involved in the Christian life, but please understand, we live by faith in the Word of God, not by our feeling as was taught to me and as I was disciplined years ago. Emotion, feeling is not the engine of the Christian life; it's the caboose. Let me say that again, feeling, emotion is not the engine of the Christian life; it's the caboose. Your emotions follow the engine, and what is the engine that drives your Christian life? It's what you know of the truth and about God.

Now, don't misunderstand me. You can certainly know and not grow, but you cannot grow and not know. Knowledge is crucial. So, knowing God is not primarily subjective but objective.

I was reminded of this again recently when we walked through Exodus, chapter 33. Turn there with me. Not too long ago, I did a series on “God’s Sermon on His Name,” and Exodus 33, you remember, is Moses’s interaction with God. And I think we would agree, I mean Moses has already spent forty days on the mountain of God; I think we would agree that he has a basic knowledge of God, right? I mean, (does) anybody here want to dispute that? Alright, so with that in mind, look at verse 13, Exodus 33, verse 13, “Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight.” Now, let’s take that apart; this is really important for you to understand for your own spiritual growth and development.

He says, first of all, “If I have found favor in your sight.” That can be translated, “Since you have shown me grace,” that’s the idea. “God, since You have shown me grace,” Moses requests, and there are three of them here, are based solely on God’s grace. But then, in verse 13, comes what is really the second of his three requests in this passage; it’s the one I want you to note, verse 13, here’s his request, “...let me know Your ways.” Now, that word ‘way’ is a very interesting Hebrew word. It refers to a well-worn path; it refers to the ruts left either by human feet or by wheels that pass constantly over the same ground.

When I was growing up in south Alabama, we lived on the edge of a lot of forested area that no one seemed, I’m sure someone owned it, but no one seemed to own it, never showed up, and we were able to use it to our hearts’ content. And we had a World War II red Willy’s jeep; and as a kid, I loved that because I could take that Jeep back in the woods and, of course, it’s red

Alabama clay, so as you would go over the same track, the same path, time after time, you know what would happen; deep ruts would form, so bad that, when it rained, it was hard to stay out of the mud. You'd try to stay up on the edge, and you would just slipped right back down in the ruts.

That's this Hebrew word, 'way.' It's the ruts; it came to refer metaphorically to 'habits or patterns of behavior.' What is he saying? "Let me know your ruts?" You realize God has predictable patterns of behavior, and aren't you glad? He's not capricious. God has ruts in how He acts and how He behaves and how He interacts with us. His actions have worn deep ruts that can be traced and followed. So, he says, "God, let me know your predictable patterns of behavior, (Now watch what he says next in verse 13,) in order that I may know you." Wait a minute, Moses, I thought you already knew God, I mean, you spent forty-days on the mountain with Him. Yes, but he wanted to know Him more; he wanted to grow in the depth of his relationship, and how is that going to happen? It wasn't going to happen even by the experience of being at Mount Sinai!

I mean, think about those two-million Jews at the foot of Mount Sinai. So, how long did that experience last them? Think golden calf, right? Experience isn't going to change you; do not imagine that some emotional, spiritual experience is going to somehow magically change you as a person, not going to happen!

How does it happen? How do you grow in the depth of your relationship with a God into whose fellowship you have entered? It's the way Moses did. "Lord, let me know Your ruts, let me

know Your predictable patterns of behavior so that I might truly know You better?" It's only when we begin to understand God's ways that we really come to know God. Then, Moses, at the end of verse 13, "...so that I may find favor in Your sight."

In other words, you've already show me grace, but when I really come to know you and what you're like, it's going to just bring greater grace. God's answer to Moses's requests comes in verse 19, God says, "...I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you." That's the answer to the request to see God's glory.

But here's His answer to the request to know His ways, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you." And, of course, down in chapter 34, verses 6 and 7, comes the fulfillment of that promise. And what does God do? God simply declares His ways. He declares His ways, what He's like, "I am gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love," (paraphrased) and on it goes.

Don't miss the point though, here's what I want you to see, we grow in our knowledge of God as we grow in our knowledge of His ways, not by some emotional-driven, mystical experience. Now, your emotions will follow. Let me tell you, I get carried away emotionally based on what I come to know about God, but don't get the caboose before the engine. Don't let your emotions drive your Christian life.

One commentator writes this:

There is little room for mysticism in biblical religion. We do not know God by having some sort of inexplicable, ethereal communion with Him in which our feelings are used as the evidence for our closeness to Him. We know Him by learning His ways.

In other words, by objective rather than subjective emotional means.

Now, we understand this at a human level. From the moment of my daughters' conception, all three of them. From the moment of their conception, I had a relationship with them as father. I was their father, and that never changed and can never change.

Now, early in their lives, shortly after they were born, within a few months anyway, they became aware that I was their father. There was this budding awareness of the fact that there was a relationship that existed. Gradually, in their little brains, they began to understand that they could trust me to protect them and to provide for them. So, something scary comes, you know, comes down the road and what happens? They run to dad. So, I was their father before they knew it, but then they gradually grew in awareness that I was their father, and then they gradually grew in their understanding that they could trust me in certain ways.

But it's only as my daughters have reached maturity that they have come to know me as they have grown in knowing more about me and my character, my ways, my predictable patterns, who I really am. Folks, that's exactly how it is with our heavenly Father. From the moment of your spiritual birth, He has been your Father, but growing to understand that and growing to understand Him happens over time as you grow in your knowledge of His character. This is

what the Christian life is like. So, don't buy the lie that somehow you need to seek an experience, you need to live on emotional fumes; they will not sustain you.

The purpose of John's first letter and ultimately of the Apostles' Proclamation, as a whole, is that we may have and know that we have fellowship with God, with Christ, and with God's people.

Now, the second purpose, briefly, for writing builds on that. It's the fullness of our joy, the fullness of our joy. This is pretty straightforward, verse 4, "These things (referring to the entire letter) These things we write." Now, why does John say "we" here? In other places he says, "I write." Chapter 2, verse 1, "I am writing." But here he says, "We write." I think it's probably because he sees himself still writing in solidarity with the other Apostles even though by this time, they're dead. Together, they were witnesses; together, they proclaimed this message, and together, these are the purposes they desired in the lives of the people they ministered to. He says, "These things we write so that (Here's his purpose.) our joy may be made complete.

Now, by our joy here, John doesn't mean only his joy; he means his joy and the joy of his readers. Remember, we're in the fellowship. He wants everybody in the fellowship to experience this joy. John's joy would be incomplete unless his readers experience the same joy. That means he wants us ultimately. Let's forget John for a moment. Remember this is authored by the Spirit of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, He wants us to experience complete or fulfilled joy. How? By gaining an assurance that we know the Father and we know His Son, Jesus Christ. There's no greater joy than the assurance that we are truly the son of God. Knowing God, being

in the fellowship, will get you to heaven, but knowing that you know Him will give you a taste of heaven right here.

J. C. Ryle writes:

Assurance makes a Christian patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings, in every condition content. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places over which he travels, and it lightens the valley of the shadow of death.

That's assurance and that assurance leads to joy, full complete joy.

Now, obviously, our joy will never be fully complete here in this fallen world, so although we can truly experience this joy described in verse 4 here, and we're supposed to, it ultimately looks to the life to come for its ultimate expression. Psalm 16:11, "...In Your presence is (What?) fullness of joy," in your presence.

Now, look at the prologue again. I want you to see how amazing this is. Verse 1 begins in eternity past and moves forward to the incarnation in the second half of verse 1. But when we get to verse 4, verse 4 extends into eternity future when we will experience nothing but unmitigated, unwavering, unending joy! How do you respond to this?

Let me give you briefly just two responses. First of all, if you're here this morning and you don't know God, you can. Let me just ask you, and I want you to truly, I want every person here to ask yourself this question? "Do I truly know God?" I'm not asking if you know something

about God. We all do. I'm asking, "Do you know the Father, do you know God as Father, is He your Father?"

Listen, that can be true today if you will simply repent of your sins and put your faith in the One He sent, in His perfect life, His substitutionary death, and His resurrection. You can be born of God. He will change you; He will make you His own child, and I plead with you to do that today.

But if you're already a follower of Jesus Christ, can I plead with you to get all that mystical, subjective muck out of your brain and realize that, by God's grace, you are in the fellowship? And Christ wants you to know that, and He wants you to see the ramifications of that in your life. Diligently read and study I John, not just on Sundays, but through the week in order to gain the assurance that Christ wants you to have and to experience the fullness of joy that only comes when you are assured of that.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this amazing passage and this amazing book; we are so excited about our journey through it. We're so excited that you want us to know that we've entered into the fellowship, and with that, to experience fullness of joy. Lord, I pray that for all of those who are truly in Christ, those who have repented and believed, Lord, that you would give them even the beginnings of that from our study today, and may that even grow deeper and richer in the weeks ahead.

And, Lord, I pray for those who are here who don't know you as Father, they don't know your Son. Help them to see that they can if they'll simply turn from their rebellion, turn from their willingness to live life on their own, separate from you, and simply come humbly to you, seeking the forgiveness that's found in your Son, they can be born of you and enter into the fellowship. I pray it in Jesus's name, Amen.