

## 03. The Epistle of 1 John—1:4-9

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### 1 John 1:1-4 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> 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.**

As we said last week, John's first epistle isn't easy to outline—but I think he tries to help us.

Four times in this epistle John says, **"These things I write to you..."** or **"These things I have written to you..."**—

- **"That you may not sin" (2:1)**
- **"That you be not deceived" (2:26)**
- **"That you may know you have eternal life" (5:13)**

And the first one comes only four verses into chapter 1—**"These things I write to you that your joy may be full" (1:4)**

Paul the Apostle lists **'joy'** in Galatians 5:22 as one of the *fruits* of the Spirit.

The fruits of the Spirit are actually—the attributes of God.

God's attributes are intrinsic to His nature—and to His nature alone. That means that unbelievers (what the Bible calls the "natural man") cannot duplicate the attributes of God from a fallen heart—which means he can 'fake' but cannot 'make' the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The only way for a person to experience the attributes of God in their life (which are exclusive to His nature)—is to have the God's nature *planted* within them.

And that only happens when they receive Jesus into their heart as Savior and the Holy Spirit moves in.

At that moment, as Peter tells us, they become *"partakers of God's divine nature."* (2Peter 1:4)

Once God's nature is planted within a person thru the new birth, as they abide in Him—the fruit of the Spirit will grow 'naturally' as a by-product in their lives.

This is essentially what John tells us in our passage—

**1 John 1:3-4 (NKJV)**

<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.**

The Greek word for ‘fellowship’ is *koinonia* and simply means “*to have in common.*”

When it is applied to our relationship with God as believers it means—“*to have communion or ‘oneness’ with the Lord.*”

John is telling us that our fellowship with God produces wonderful fruit in our lives—the first one he lists is, fullness of joy! Here’s something you may not realize, as believers in Christ—we are commanded in the New Testament to be joyful!—

**"Rejoice always!"** [the NLT2—“***Always be joyful!***”] (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

How is this possible when we’re going through deep personal problems and our world seems to be crumbling down around us?—it seems so unrealistic, even ludicrous to tell people—“*God commands you to be joyful!*”.

First of all, we need to differentiate between *happiness* and *joy*.

**Happiness** is a *state of mind* brought about through our outward circumstances—whereas **joy** is a *condition of the heart* brought about through an eternal connection with the living God thru His Son, Jesus Christ.

Happiness comes and goes depending on our circumstances—and since our circumstances are constantly changing, we can find ourselves experiencing intense happiness one minute and deep sadness the next.

Joy on the other hand is a constant because absolute truth never changes—which means God’s promises never change. Promises such as, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” (Hebrews 13:5); and “*all things are working together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” (Romans 8:28)

Look, as Christians we believe in the promises of God in His Word—we believe that Jesus is always with us. But does God really expect us to maintain joy in the midst of sorrow, suffering and loss? I mean when our world seems like everything is crumbling down around us—how can we possibly have joy with so much pain and heartache in our lives?

Well, praise the Lord—we have an epistle in the New Testament that deals with that very issue—the epistle to the Philippians!

The epistle to the Philippians is one of four epistles that Paul wrote—from prison! Paul spent two years in prison in Rome waiting to stand before Caesar to present his case—a trial that could very well have ended in his execution—and yet the theme of this epistle is “joy in the Lord!”!

In fact, we could call Philippians the “Epistle of Joy” because Paul uses the word ‘joy’ and ‘rejoice’ over a dozen times in those four chapters. How was it that Paul could have so much joy while in such a terrible place with his very life on the line?

Well, Paul’s secret was that he learned to fill his mind with Jesus!

We see this clearly in the first chapter alone where Paul uses “Christ” or “Jesus Christ” 17 times—which figures out to more than once every two verses!

Even though Paul talks about *joy* quite a bit in this epistle he talks about *Jesus* much more! **That** was the reason he had so much joy in the midst of his difficult circumstance—he cultivated a heart that didn’t focus on the *problem*, but on the Person of his Lord Jesus Christ!

One author wrote—

*“How much Christians need to learn this. There is so much bickering in Christian circles, so much complaining, so much unhappiness. This was never meant to be. Christians were meant to be filled with love and joy and peace—in short, with all the virtues that are the result of the life of Christ within the Christian...To be filled with Christ is the secret of real Christian living. It is the secret of true happiness.”*

If we want to rejoice always, we must live always near to God—*“If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.”* (James 4:8)

When we were born-again, we were made partakers of God’s divine nature and as such the joy of the Lord became available to us through our relationship with Jesus. Notice the ‘warning’ that Jesus gives in John 15, almost in passing—

#### **John 15:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

I want you to notice what Jesus is saying here—He is saying that His joy, once planted in the heart of a believer at salvation, won’t automatically *remain* in their heart, and that it can be driven out or stolen from us—how?

Paul tells us in Philippians that there are four things that will steal our joy (if we let them)—circumstances; people; selfishness and worry. ([Check out our study on Philippians](#))

#### **And what is antidote to these joy stealers?**

Well, Jesus gave us the answer to that in John 15—

#### **John 15:1, 4-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...<sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...

Again, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5 is—**JOY!**

#### **John 15:7-8, 11 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me [continue, remain, stay in communion with], and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be [‘prove yourselves to be’] My disciples... <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

Did you notice that Jesus said, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you...you will bear much fruit”*—or in other words, you will have “much joy”—and that your joy would remain!

Abiding in the Word, filling your mind with the Word and allowing it to transform your thinking about circumstances, people, self and worry (the ‘joy’ stealers) is the key to Jesus’ joy remaining in us and overflowing our lives.

That in a nutshell was the secret to Paul’s ability to have joy while in prison with the possibility of execution hanging over his head—he learned to fill his mind with Jesus!

In fact, Paul uses the word ‘**mind**’ 10 times; ‘**thinking**’ 5 times; and ‘**remember**’ 16 times in Philippians—the Epistle of Joy. It’s because the secret to Christian joy is found in your *mind* (it’s rooted in the heart but accessed in your mind) in how you think about life, how you approach it and you’re attitude towards it—and might I add that your ‘outlook’ will be determined by your ‘uplook’—

**Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Cultivate an ‘eternal perspective’ of life.

And please understand, I’m not talking about PMA (‘Positive Mental Attitude’)—I’m talking about BMA (‘Biblical Mental Attitude’) or what Paul calls having the “mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16)

When we read in 1 John 1:4 that John is writing his epistle, in part, so that our joy may be full—hopefully now you have a better ‘handle’ on what he’s talking about.

**1 John 1:5 (NKJV)**

<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.**

As we have pointed out many times—in the Scriptures “*light*” and “*darkness*” are used often as metaphors—

“**Light**” is often used in the Scriptures to represent—*spiritual truth, holiness, and moral purity.*

“**Darkness**” is often used in the Scriptures to represent—*spiritual error, evil, and moral impurity.*

When John says that “**God is light and in Him is no darkness at all**”—he means that God is absolutely holy, absolutely righteous, and absolutely pure—and that in Him there is the complete absence of evil of any kind.

This also means that He cannot look with favor upon any form of sin or evil nor can He have fellowship with those who are living in sin or promoting evil. (Isa.59:1-2)

**1 John 1:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> **If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

One pastor said—

*“Scripture reveals two fundamental principles that flow from the foundational truth that God is light. First, light represents the truth of God, as embodied in His Word. The psalmist wrote these familiar words: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.... The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Ps. 119:105, 130; cf. Prov. 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19). The light and life of God are inherently connected to and characterized by truth.*

*Second, Scripture also links light with virtue and moral conduct. The Apostle Paul instructed the Ephesians, “You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Eph. 5:8–9; cf. Isa. 5:20; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:5–6).*

*Those two essential properties of divine light and life are crucial in distinguishing genuine faith from a counterfeit claim. If one professes to possess the Light and to dwell in it—to have received eternal life—he will show evidence of spiritual life by his devotion both to truth and to righteousness.”*

#### **1 John 1:6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

John tells us here that if we “**practice the truth**” it’s one of the evidences that proves we are children of God—even as he goes on to say that those who “*practice sin*” prove they are children of the devil:

#### **1 John 3:7-8, 10 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

<sup>8</sup> He who sins [*‘practices sin’*] is of the devil...<sup>10</sup> In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God...

Now look, John understands that even the godliest Christians are going to sin once in a while—but committing a sin here and there isn’t what John has in mind (although I’m not condoning it)—*practicing* sin is what he’s zeroing in on. (Comment)

#### **1 John 1:7 (NKJV)**

**<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.**

When John talks about those who “**walk in darkness**” (verse 6)—he isn’t talking about individual sins or an occasional lapse—but a lifestyle or a *pattern* of living.

The same is true when he talks about those who “**walk in the light**” (verse 7)—this is not referring to someone who goes to church once in a while, but a pattern of living that puts Jesus Christ first and keeps the commandments of God on a daily basis.

Let me say that I believe that John is talking about ‘*positional*’ cleansing here in verse 7—and in verses 8 and 9 he has ‘*practical*’ cleansing in mind.

Remember we said last week that our fellowship with God is both ‘**positional**’ and ‘**practical**’ fellowship.

We enter into *positional* fellowship (oneness) with Him at the moment of salvation—that fellowship can never be broken because it is eternal and unconditional. However, *practical* fellowship with the LORD can be broken thru sin and can only be restored thru confession and repentance (v.9).

Well, John is talking about positional fellowship with God based on positional cleansing from sin in verse 7—and then he follows it by mentioning practical fellowship with God based on practical cleansing from sin in verses 8-9.

Since John’s gospel and first epistle are so closely connected—it wouldn’t surprise me if John’s comments in verses 7-9 of chapter 1, where he is talking about positional and practical aspects of our fellowship and walk with the Lord—comes right from what Jesus said about these things in the upper room, the night before His crucifixion in John 13.

**John 13:5-6, 8-14 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. <sup>6</sup> Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"... <sup>8</sup> Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup> For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." <sup>12</sup> So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

The word translated **"wash"** in verses 5, 6, 8, 12, and 14 is *nipto* and means *"to wash a part of the body."*

But the word translated **"bathed"** in verse 10 is *louo* and means *"to bathe all over."*

In that culture when a person took a bath (usually in the morning) and was cleansed *completely*, they called it 'louo.'

But then, as they walked on dirt paths with open sandals throughout the day their feet would become dirty and would need to be washed as they entered someone's home to eat and fellowship with them—this washing of their *feet* was referred to as 'nipto.'

When the sinner trusts the Savior, he is *"bathed all over"* (made completely clean thru the blood of Christ) and his sins are washed away and forgiven—*"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"* (Hebrews 10:17).

However, as the believer walks thru this filthy, defiled world throughout the day—it is easy to become "dirty" in our walk with Jesus. When that happens, he or she doesn't need to be 'bathed' (saved) all over again; they simply need to have their 'feet' washed.

To the Jewish people the feet were the dirtiest part of the body because that was the part of the body that came in contact with the 'world' and *"defiled their walk"*. Jesus uses the feet as the illustration of *practical* cleansing (spiritually speaking) because they represent our 'walk' with Him.

That's why it's so important that we keep our walk "clean"—because if we are defiled by the world, we can't walk with the Lord and have communion with Him. So, in that regard we must constantly confess our sins, repent and wash daily in the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26)—which, if we will do, God promises He will honor and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (John 1:9).

When God *"bathes us all over"* in salvation, He brings about our *union* with Christ—and that is a settled relationship that cannot change.

The verb *bathed* in John 13:10 is in the *perfect tense* in the Greek and denotes 'something that happened in the past, but the effects of which are ongoing now and forever' (with regard to salvation). However, our *daily communion* with Jesus depends on our keeping ourselves *"unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27).

The Christian life consists of one bath but many "foot-washings".