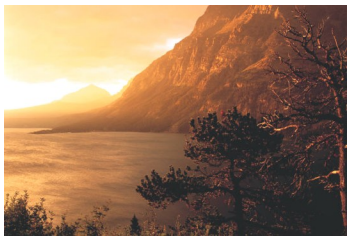
GOD'S FELLOWSHIP AND FORGIVENESS

(I John 1:5-9)



2/9/03

INTRODUCTION:

***God promises that you can experience His fellowship and forgiveness.**

I. God's Promise of <u>FELLOWSHIP</u> (v. 5-7)

*One Condition: You must <u>walk in the light</u>

A. You cannot enjoy God's fellowship and walk in the darkness at the same time (v. 6)

B. You can enjoy God's fellowship if you live according to God's standard (v. 7)

II. God's Promise of <u>FORGIVENESS</u> (v. 8-10)

*One Condition: You must <u>confess your sins</u>

A. Confession means we do not deny the presence or practice of sin in our lives (v. 8, 10)

B. Confession means we tell the truth about what we have done (v. 9)

CONCLUSION:

GOD'S FELLOWSHIP AND FORGIVENESS

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INTRODUCTION:

Two of the most unbearable feelings are that of loneliness and feeling dirty.

ILLUS: of feeling alone and dirty.

The purpose of I John:

That you may -

1) Have <u>fellowship</u> with fellow believers (1:3)

2) Have full <u>joy</u> (1:4)

3) Sin <u>not</u> (2:1)

4) <u>Know</u> that you have <u>eternal life</u> (5:13)

***God promises that you can experience His fellowship and forgiveness.**

I. God's Promise of <u>FELLOWSHIP</u> (v. 5-7)

*One Condition: You must <u>walk in the light</u>

V. 5

John is saying, This "message" (report) is not my idea, not my conception about God, but it is <u>God's</u> message (Christ's message) about <u>Himself</u>, and about how to be right with Him.

"Declare" = lit. to re-announce, announce again. In other words, John is saying, "We have

told you in the past, and now tell you again "that God is light"."

Some lessons are worth repeating. Though many truths are very familiar to some Christians, we need to be stirred up by being reminded (II Pet. 1:12-13).

John frequently identifies the attributes of God by the phrase, "God is ___"

Examples:

John 4:24 - "God is Spirit"
I John 4:8 - "God is love"
I John 1:5 - "God is light" (holy)

God is "light" - John begins this epistle of I John the same way as he began the Gospel of John - namely, in pointing out the fact that God (the logos) is light (John 1:4-9, 8:12).

God is light. The light that His glory emits cannot be seen by mortal man. He dwells in unapproachable light (I Tim. 6:16).

"No darkness at all" - Greek, a double negative, emphasizing the absolute brilliance of God.

It was Plato who said, "Light is the shadow of God."

"Sin is darkness" and God is totally set apart from sin. He is holy, holy, holy (Is. 6).

A. You cannot enjoy God's fellowship and walk in the darkness at the same time (v. 6)

"Fellowship" = koinonia - from koinos = "common;" hence, communion. The word means to share in common with someone else. The word describes the relationship between at least two people whereby they can talk together, walk together, work together, etc. It is a word that denotes mutuality and intimacy. To be in fellowship with God means to be on "talking terms" to Him; to be "right with Him," to be receiving blessings from Him; to be serving Him -- simply to be close to Him.

Verse 6 explained:

If someone says, "I am presently enjoying [present tense] fellowship with god," yet they are living lives of disobedience to God's Word, they are lying to themselves [middle voice] and are not practicing the truth of God.

According to verses 6-7, one is either walking in darkness or light. There are no gray areas with God.

B. You can enjoy God's fellowship if you live according to God's standard (v. 7)

God called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9).

We are children of light (I Thes. 5:5).

"IF we walk..."

Note: Fellowship with God is conditional (it is contingent on our walk).

[Note the "ifs" in v. 7 and 9 - showing that both fellowship and forgiveness are conditional - that is, they are dependent on certain conditions being met.

"If we walk" - John includes himself (cp. "if we - v. 6, 8, 9, 10).

The fact that the Apostle John includes himself shows that even he was not exempt from conditional fellowship.

All Christians (even the most prominent) need to walk right to be right with God.

"If we walk" = present tense - lit. If we are walking. Your fellowship with God today depends on your walk with God today.

Having walked in the light in the past does not guarantee fellowship with God in the present.

Even Paul, after having faithfully served Christ in the past, feared more than anything being a castaway - that he should fail God in the present.

To walk in the light is: to walk according to the Bible; to walk in such a way that you would not be ashamed of what you are doing; to be honest with yourself (not covering up sin, but bringing it out in the open before God-v.9)

"As He is in the light" - the light we must walk in is the same light (standard of holiness) that God walks in.

The only standard for true "light" is the Bible, God's holy Word.

"Fellowship one with another" = God and the Christian.

NOTE: Though this verse is speaking about fellowship with God, believers only have good fellowship with other believers as they are walking in the light.

Not only does walking in the light guarantee fellowship, but it guarantees daily cleansing from the sins we commit.

Walking in the light is not speaking about a sinlessly perfect walk; it is speaking about the overall emphasis and desire of your life. The way God measures walking in the light is not by the number of self-imposed, petty, legalistic rules you keep, but a heart that longs after God and His righteousness. For these people God grants daily cleansing.

--The means of God's cleansing: the blood of Jesus, i.e. His efficacious work on Calvary.

--The scope of God's cleansing: all sin (cp. v. 9b)

The shed blood of Jesus not only has power to save, but to sanctify.

The shed blood of Jesus not only cleansed us judicially (forensically) so that we can be saved eternally, but it is efficacious to cleanse us daily so we can live a life that pleases God.

Sin keeps us from fellowship with God; therefore, we should hate it in our lives.

Evangelist Billy Sunday said: "I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot. I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I"ll gum it to death until I go home to glory!"

II. God's Promise of FORGIVENESS (v. 8-10)

*One Condition: You must confess your sins

A. Confession means we do not deny the presence or practice of sin in our lives (v. 8, 10)

V. 8

"We have no sin" - present tense. Anyone who says that he has presently reached perfection and has no sin (he never commits acts of sin) is deceiving himself and the truth is not in him.

"We deceive ourselves" - we do not deceive God, since He knows the depths of man's heart (Heb. 4:12-13).

You were deceived if you ever said: "I could never do a thing like that!" You don't know your true nature.

"The truth is not in us" = the more you know the truth, the more you will be aware of your depravity; your old nature; your inherent sinful disposition; your weakness in the flesh.

Those who know God the best also know themselves the best and they cry out with Paul "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24).

A chief characteristic of the unregenerate man is his utter refusal to fully admit his sin.

John's statement has application to the:

1) Self-righteous (unsaved man who sees no need for Christ's salvation)

2) Sinless perfection doctrine (Christians, particularly of the Holiness movement, the Church of the Nazarene, etc., who believe it is possible to reach the point of sinless perfection in this life.

3) The Gnostic heresy

Some gnostics believed that since matter was evil and not the soul (the mind, the inner man), man was not really sinful internally, but merely externally.

V. 10

"This is a denial of any specific acts of sin, while in v. 8 we have the denial of the principle (the existence) of sin" (Robertson, p. 208).

"We have not sinned" - we have not missed the mark.

All who make such a statement make God out to be a liar, since He has said all have missed the mark (Rom. 3:23).

"His Word is not in us" = someone who is ignorant of God's righteous standards (revealed in Scripture) generally views himself as OK, not that bad.

The more the Word is in you, the more you will see your sin.

B. Confession means we tell the truth about what we have done (v. 9)

"If we confess" - present tense, indicating a habitual or continual practice.

"Confess" = homo logeo. Lit. "to say the same thing." To have the same opinion of our sin as God has.

NOTE: Confession is not merely to say "I'm sorry" but it is ***to see our sin for what it is and admit it!** (not to excuse it, redefine it [as "sickness"] or explain it away)

"Our sins" - must take personal responsibility for our sin (cp. Ps. 32:1ff).

ILLUS: a man and the counsellor - Wiersbe, p. 482

"Our sins" = hamartias; to miss the mark; to come short of God's standard of holiness (Rom. 3:23).

"He is faithful" - another attribute of God is His faithfulness - Hymn - "Great is Thy Faithfulness"

Every time you confess to God, you will be forgiven (not for restored relationship to God but for a restored fellowship with God).

God is more anxious to forgive than we are to confess. His forgiveness is faithful, dependable, trustworthy, reliable, always present. God will never say, "I will not forgive" to the one who genuinely confesses.

"He is ... just" - God is righteous in His act of forgiving His saints.

The reason God is "just" to forgive is because His just demands against sin have been satisfied. The penalty has been paid. Now He is both just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

"Forgive" - primarily means to send forth or send away. It pictures a removal and a carrying away of something.

Our sins are "removed as far as the east is from the west..."

"Cleanse" - to wash and make pure. Not only does God remove (forgive) our sin, but He erases every trace of that sin from His holy presence.

Sad to say, many Christians confess their sins, but doubt God's desire ("faithful") or ability ("just") to forgive and cleanse. Hence, they live life with a load of false guilt.

The accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10) may try to throw dirt back into your face that has been removed by God (EX: Zech. 3:1-7).

"When he reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!" (Rev. 20:1-3, 10).

"All unrighteousness" - not a trace is left

"All unrighteousness" - all unjust thoughts, words, and deeds are scrubbed clean by God. Every lack of conformity to the moral law of God is rectified.

"What is the secret of forgiveness? It is God's faithfulness and righteousness - not our feelings or remorse, nor anything in ourselves - that cleanses us from all unrighteousness" (David Hocking, I John, p. 22).

CONCLUSION: