

1 John 1:3

“Christ-Centered Fellowship”

Introduction

One of Tom Hanks classic performances is his role in the film Castaway. In this film Tom Hanks stars as a time obsessed system engineer who travels worldwide resolving productivity problems at FedEx depots. While flying through a storm, his plane crashes into the Pacific Ocean and he floats all night before waking up on an uninhabited island. During the movie several FedEx packages float to the island as well, one of which happens to be a Wilson volleyball. Not long after receiving the ball while Tom whose character's name is Chuck is trying to make a fire his hand slips and his hand is cut badly with the stick he was using. He then starts picking stuff up and starts throwing them out of anger. Sometime later he uses a towel to make a face on the ball in what was his bloody handprint. He then begins talking to the ball, referring to it as, “Wilson.” That film shows in dramatic fashion that it is inherent in us to crave “fellowship” or companionship.

The theme song to the TV show, “Cheers” is entitled “Where everybody knows your name.” The song is discussing that when our life is falling apart and we are facing difficulty it would be nice to get away and then the chorus says that, “Sometimes (second chorus says be glad there is one place in the world you can go) you wanna go where everybody knows your name and they're always glad you came. You

wanna be where you can see our troubles are all the same. You wanna be where everybody knows your name.” While that’s humorous, the reality is that the show centers in a bar and they are saying that you can come there without fear of judgment. You are always welcome there. You are always known there. You are always wanted there. You can be accepted there. Mankind was created for fellowship!

In the beginning when God created man, He said that it was not good that man should be alone. Man needs “fellowship.” Man needs companionship. Man not only craves companionship and needs fellowship, we were created for it. This fellowship as described in 1 John 1:3 is always vertical and horizontal. Fellowship always involved God and our fellow man. In the beginning Adam was given Eve and “the Word” of God (Christ) walked with them in the cool of the day. By Adam’s sinful disobedience that fellowship was broken and from then on man faces two choices. We will either have our fellowship with God restored through the sacrifice of Christ or we will settle for a cheap substitute. I mentioned Cheers and the reality is that a bar is the worlds “fellowship.” It fails to reach its target but sadly, it is doing more to meet mans need of fellowship than many professing Church’s are. Lord help us!

As we have seen in this passage, the apostle John is writing to a group of believers during a time of much division. Some from the Johannine community had abandoned the faith that John presents in His

gospel and were preaching and teaching falsehoods. John combats those falsehoods with truth! He answers the questions that believers had about their faith. Was Jesus eternal? Was He truly God manifested in the flesh? Did they have the truth? Where they truly saved? In verses 1-2 John has addressed the eternality and incarnate manifestation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son. Now in verses 3-4 John reveals two objectives for writing. He is writing and “declaring” the message of Jesus Christ (i.e. the Gospel), so that we may enjoy fellowship with Him and with God the Father and God the Son. He also writes that our joy might be made complete.

David Allen in preaching the word commentary series writes; “the root meaning (of fellowship) is a deep sharing of things in common.” He also quotes G. Campbell Morgan from his sermon “Fellowship with God” as having suggested that the word fellowship is a rich and spacious word, full of suggestiveness, almost impossible of full and final translation. He writes that the two key concepts Morgan develops in that sermon to describe the Christian’s fellowship with God are “communion” and “partnership.” He says that Morgan has in mind “deep friendship.” Morgan also suggest that fellowship means responsibility. To be in fellowship with God means that we have gone into business with Him! David writes, “Fellowship with God means we share mutual interests, devotion, and activity. As Christians in close fellowship with God, his heartbeat becomes our heartbeat, his mission

becomes our mission, his goals and plans become our goals and plans.

We love what he loves, desire what he desires, hate what he hates, and

will what he wills. The Christian life should be an ever-deepening

fellowship with God that creates and reproduces within us the mind of

Christ.”

It seems that John uses the term here for fellowship synonymously or interchangeably with salvation. You see, salvation is not merely acknowledging intellectual doctrines. It certainly is not less than that, but it leads to much more than that. Salvation is not only outward obedience to the Word, again it isn't less than that but the ocean of obedience flows from the rivers of fellowship. To put it another way, the Christian community is built on the foundation of Christian fellowship. But, lest we think that the community is something it isn't, the Christian community is a community of Christian fellowship! Fellowship is the goal of the community's existence. In fact, if we do not have Christian fellowship we have ceased to be a Christian community.

The infinite Son of God who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity clothed Himself in flesh to redeem His people from their sins for the purpose of bringing them into a fellowship. He died to make us one! One with the Father, one with the Son, one with the Spirit, and one with each other. Listen to the words of Jesus' high priestly prayer, recorded for us in John 17.³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: ²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The fellowship that Christ prayed for and John wrote about is a mutual sharing in the life of God which is received by grace through faith in His Son from the regenerating or live giving power of the Holy Spirit. That is the “common” denominator that believers share together! That is why you can have two totally different people from different backgrounds in different stages of life that “connect” with one another. The relationship that we share with one another has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with HIM! John is writing that the fellowship He shared with Christ (seeing, hearing, and touching) can be entered into and experienced by those to whom he was writing and by those of us who are reading tonight!

We can experience or share in the fellowship that John had with Christ, which again was seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and touching

Christ. How? We see Him, hear Him, and touch Him by faith in the saving message of the Gospel. And, just like John's fellowship continued with Christ after He left through His Spirit, our fellowship is not a one-time experience but is an abiding fellowship that will last for all eternity!

1Cor. 1:9 God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

2Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. ²⁰ At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. ²¹ He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, *If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

There is absolutely nothing that could break the true believers fellowship with God and yet we allow petty opinions and preferences to

divide the body of Christ. May we not divide from a brother over anything that Christ wouldn't or said another way may we only divide from a brother in Christ over something that Christ divides from.

Lets pray. Father, thank you for including us so graciously in your fellowship. There are many places in this world where we are rejected and unwelcomed, but Father in Christ we are accepted, we are loved, and we are welcomed. Help us to be motivated as John was to invite others into this wonderful fellowship. In Christ name we pray, amen.