The Church and Its Fellowship

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[0:00] evening everybody uh just what a brilliant brilliant passage at the church i became a christian at uh it was kind of like the cool rock and roll church in auckland when rock and roll was kind of cool i guess and and uh we would make fun of words like fellowship because they were just kind of old cheesy christianese words and i feel bad about that now because uh and here's a key sentence uh fellowship is at the center of god's purposes for the world fellowships at the center of god's purposes for the world let's have a look at verse uh one of john one john one to see what i mean here okay see that there right at the start yeah it's gonna be really helpful to have your bibles because i'll be kind of getting right into a little minutiae okay and you'll get a bit confused otherwise here we go verse one you see the that that which is from the beginning the that is the jesus so that's sort of echoing uh genesis in the beginning god created and echoing the start of john's gospel in the beginning was the word etc so john's saying that jesus and then just slide your eyes across verse one there that jesus john says we heard him we saw him we looked at him we touched him that jesus who is eternally with the father he he came he came down to us to be with us that guy so we all know who we're talking about john's guy we all know who we're talking about right that guy there and then in verse three says we proclaim him which is great we proclaim this guy it's fantastic but why do we proclaim him and john gives us gives us the answer straight away in verse three so that you see that halfway along verse three so that you might have fellowship with us so that you might have fellowship with the father and the son that's a bit wild isn't it i mean we don't throw throw around phrases like uh the reason jesus came kind of lightly you know we don't throw around stuff like that lightly the goal of the incarnation the reason for christmas the purpose of jesus being born that's that's a big sentence you might say well jesus died forgiven great that's the immediate benefit yes but to what end we are forgiven so we can have fellowship that's what this whole passage is about here fellowship what exactly is fellowship greek word koinonia koinonia it's a word that means like a group having a common purpose you know the the seats of the back of a bus that face each other right they're facing each other but you're in the bus and you're going in the same direction you know what that's actually not a bad it's not a bad picture actually to be honest the fellowship of koinonia there it's god's people they share a common purpose they're going in the same direction so they're not independent from each other they're going in the same direction caring loving each other to get a really good idea of what fellowship looks like sort of on the ground a great exercise would be to look up all the references to one another in the new testament let me do part of it for you here we go uh be devoted to one another one another honor one another it's romans 12 live in harmony with one another 1 peter 3 accept one another romans 15 serve one another in love galatians 5 be kind and compassionate to one another ephesians 4 admonish one another colossians 3 encourage one another hebrews 3 spur one another on towards love and good deeds hebrews 10 offer hospitality 1 peter 4 to one another and love one another 1 peter 1 lots more so this is what koinonia should look like a theologian bruce walkie who used to be a local here at regent college said this he said the concept of koinonia means that

i share your burdens and you share mine a koinonia is your place of economic and relational security fellowship is not sitting down for a cup of coffee with someone fellowship is suffering together with you whenever wherever whenever you have true koinonia it is expensive so that's fellowship that's koinonia incredibly important in fact the purpose of jesus coming but it's not just a proposition it's not an idea it's active there is an obligation a wonderful duty to care for one another so what is the basis of this fellowship what keeps it kind of you know what keeps it trucking along what what shared thoughts no thinking the same things same interests no the basis for togetherness is the invisible reality of our fellowship with god there's three still our fellowship is with the father and the son so john's saying come and join that because that's what binds us together

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there is no better clue so this vertical relationship we have with god makes this relationship we have possible and it makes it possible across all barriers have you ever had that wonderful experience of meeting someone who's very different to you finding out they're a christian and like oh and it something changes right you're like oh you're my brother you're my sister this is this is awesome oh you go to that church oh that's a great church yeah great amazing i love that so as i've said the basis for uh connection is the fact that we share the same father son and holy spirit and that shared thing eclipses any differences we might have race class age education doesn't matter we're family family moving together in the same direction with a common purpose nothing else but our shared fellowship with god can hold us together so well not tradition not a denomination nothing okay it's it's it's got to be god or we're sunk on a side note that's why the more diverse our congregations are the better we demonstrate that uh what connects us is not culturally bound it's it's bound by the reality of again i'll say a shared connection with god a shared communion with god so the more diverse we are the more we adorn the gospel because diversity it uh it it it displays the gospel a wonderful way that's a side note okay okay here we go coming back to our passage so those first four verses are all about the importance the basis outworking of fellowship now we're going to move on that's the first little section verses one to four have a have a grab a hold of uh five to ten there you see that you're looking at five to ten right remember how i said that fellowship works across all boundaries well there is one thing that can break fellowship with god and therefore each other and that is sin and that's what this this little section is about here so god begins verse five he defines god which is like that's a big thing to try and do right try and define god he says god is light there's no darkness in him wonderful description if you were to borrow from nature well it'll be just if you're going to borrow from nature something to describe god light is probably probably the best thing you can arrive at i would think because there's so much in light in terms of what it represents purity and holiness and life and clarity and it's revealing and intelligence and happiness and excellence and truth our greatest desires uh there's no darkness there's no shadiness god is not tainted in any way which is

why sin can't can't go near him god is light starts off with that it's a profound statement and then john makes three sort of i guess you'd call them propositional sentences uh verse six verse eight verse 10 they all start with if we say do you see that there if we say and then he says sort of three things quite meaty things verse six if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we lie we do not practice the truth verse eight if we say we have no sin while we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us verse 10 if we say we have not sinned we make him a liar and his word is not in us so they're dealing with lies we tell ourselves so verse six the first lie is is this the lie is oh we can have fellowship with god without dealing with sin which is a lie verse eight is you could summarize it by saying oh it's it's it's sin's not really a problem it's not really a problem for me i'm a good person we do that all the time i think and and society does that in very sophisticated ways like uh redefining things like selfishness we redefine it as standing up for your rights for example the third lie verse 10 uh god is specific about some sinful behavior and this lie is a denial of that now do you see how how john pairs each of these lies with a diagnosis and the first two he says if you think that well the truth's not in you that that's your problem there's no truth in you the third one though he steps it up he goes if you think you haven't sinned you you're calling god a liar that's you're calling god a liar because god has declared us sinful so john pairs these lies with diagnosis but that's not all he does do you see he follows them up with the opposite much better thing to do let me show you verse six walk in darkness bad verse seven but if you walk in light you have fellowship with each other through the blood of jesus first say if you say you have no sin that's bad but verse nine it says but if we confess our sins there is forgiveness and there's cleansing john's great love him so simple don't do this do this don't lie about sin confess it don't walk in darkness walk in light what a wonderful line that is walk in light what does that mean let's just think about it for a minute what does it mean to walk in light does it mean to live well live nicely do good things sure yep of course follow the example of christ sacrificial love absolutely but it's not just that what else could it mean what else could it mean to walk in light it means uh living an exposed life light exposes doesn't it i'll give it give you an example we're um my wife and i are renovating a house and uh the longer we live in the house the more we find it's true nature so it's an old old house so the other day we were like looking up in our wall in our bedroom we keep finding cracks and stuff that appear to be getting bigger and but we saw this like just thing on the wall like a little edge like kind of a perfect little edge on the wall like a little square i went up and tapped it it was paper there was nothing behind the paper though so it was like a hole about this big and they just slapped a piece of paper on it and

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painted over it so i like to think positively i like to think that's a little drum like on the wall you know the true nature of the house is being revealed as we as the longer that we're in it walking in the light of god will do that it exposes you
so walking in light is not perfectionism walking in light means you're going to be con is the constant exposure of your sin of our sin sin which we have to deal with you know that the older i get the more sinful i feel which i'm just terribly disappointed by that but i do uh and it's not because i'm sinning more it's and i'm being sanctified i think i'm improving you know but i feel more sinful because the longer i walk in the light the more horrified i am of some of the things that are in my heart that happens when you walk in the light for a long time so the christian life walking in the light is not the sinless life it is the life of coming to god day by day father forgive me help me now i know you know i know you guys know this but christianity is not the life of moral heroes it's the life of the weak it's the life of weak people who know the provision of jesus the wonderful provision and forgiveness and cleansing work of jesus so this is wonderful the importance and source of our fellowship in this section the great barrier to fellowship sin now verses one to two of chapter two the door to fellowship how is that sin dealt with so that we can be together vertically horizontally let me let me read those two verses to you again my little children that's nice hey my little children my little children i'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the father jesus christ the righteous he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world that last but that's just as a side note that's not universalism um the the world is like uh the world's in opposition to god so it's less about volume and more about uh love jesus died for those who were opposed to him okay getting back to the beginning part of it though uh after what i said in the previous section you might think john is saying well look sin's just going to happen to kind of kind of be cool with it like don't worry about it's inevitable that is a terrible attitude to have to be uh what's the word laxadaisical that's a word right laxadaisical about this kind of thing but it's easy to get a bit ambivalent about such things i think we we so over the last couple of weekends i built to bookshelves right in the lounge bookshelves bookshelf and i've got this massive bucket of screws three inch beautiful beautiful three inch screws shiny like brassy kind of screws they're really nice and um so i'm kind of up you know doing stuff and i look down and b who's my wife and i's our youngest daughter she's 17 months old i'm looking at my wife she's 17 months old non-stead good 17 months old she's on the ground uh with her hands in the bucket of screws and she's just she's putting them in her mouth and uh she kind of just looks up at me she's got three three screws like at various pieces you know like just you know and i'm standing up you know i'm hammering away and and i'm like oh i should probably do something about that and uh but i still gotta stand this thing and get the corking up so i can dry
and ah and this is a true story my wife confirmed this i think at that point babe you walked in and said something like um um b seems to be enjoying eating those screws then i said yes yes it looks like she does amy walks out and uh i just keep working on the bookcase uh we do nothing about it now she hasn't been uh sleeping very well recently which is interesting to me it's easy to sort of get a bit apathetic about safety sometimes you know she's fine she's absolutely fine right they're too big to swallow but it is kind of it's easy to get apathetic about safety and you know important things right like your baby's eating screws you know we can get apathetic about sin can't we as an example that's where all that was going we can be apathetic about sin and it's so you don't think john is teaching apathy towards sin like it's oh it's fine you know don't worry about it's good uh he says in verse one very pastoral little children i don't want you to sin i don't want i don't want you to do that and then he says two amazing things he tells us what jesus has done for us and then he also tells us what jesus is still doing for us firstly what jesus has done for us verse two there you see verse two uh god is angry at sin because he's light he's perfect beautiful he's completely opposed to it but christ is the propitiation for our sins meaning he absorbs god's anger it's a very basic definition of propitiation i want to process it just a little bit more uh it's it's tempting it's tempting to think that god is like a grumpy boss right and you bring him presents at christmas and he'll kind of wink at your um at your misdeeds your kind of your laziness at work you know now that's the propitiation of pagan religions that you know making an offering to an unpredictable god to keep him sort of you know keep him happy so to speak john doesn't let us think like that that's why he begins the whole thing god is light he's god is pure he's eternally the same he's not a grumpy boss we don't buy him off with a few good deeds um because god doesn't take sin lightly he's not like he's not like a grandfather they'll pat us on the head and sort of go oh you're a bit mischievous uh no god doesn't doesn't do that he doesn't he doesn't pat us on the head and say oh look you're ruining my world

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you know i'm not gonna i'm not gonna say anything god is not morally flabby he's light he's truth he's righteousness there must be justice justice must be done but rather than punish us rather than destroy us he sends his son to die for us on the cross he sends his son to do that the father sends the son that's what it means when it says he is jesus jesus is the propitiation for our sins jesus didn't discover the propitiation he didn't point to it he is the propitiation he is the ransom he is the offering and our our new communion liturgy explains it really well i hope you know the bible has been pointing to this propitiation for a very very long time the sacrificial system [20:12] of the old testament ineffective in dealing with sin a signpost to what jesus would do the famous story of abraham taking his son isaac up to the mountain to sacrifice him on god's direction of course god had no intention of letting that happen an angel came stop a ram trapped in the thicket replaced isaac on the altar again right like a signpost pointing to jesus from a thousand years before him so the old testament has been pointing to this for a long time two thousand years ago god deems it time for sin to be dealt with once and for all and he sends his son this time there is no substitute for jesus there is no ram waiting in the thicket there is no angel saying stop no this is the cross this is it happens this is god dealing with our barrier to fellowship with him the father sends the son and is there anything more treasured to a father than his child and jesus dies taking upon himself god's anger at sin there is there is a great cost to the fellowship that we enjoy i guess i'll say that so that is what jesus did but jesus didn't dust off his hands you know in the ascension go up to the father and go right i've done i've done my stuff now you know i can do my own thing now can i just do my own thing now you know no jesus does this ongoing work for us you see verse one this is amazing line it says we have an advocate with the father isn't that wild an advocate in the greek original language here it's someone who speaks an advocate is someone who speaks on your behalf at like a court case so the implication here is not that just that jesus died for your sins and then just walked away he is the ongoing saviour speaking praying to the father on your behalf it's mind blowing i hope that is reassuring to you especially especially especially as you struggle with darkness in your life a few closing remarks we've had three sections here fellowship it's very very important sin is a barrier to that but god has made a way that's the passage in a nutshell and it's a theme i think that takes us right back to the start of our sermon series on the church god has always been about a people about gathering a people for himself a people to have fellowship with each other and for him and it's the centre it's at the centre of god's plan for the world and if it's at the centre of god's plan would you pray that god would make it the centre of your life as well amen work goodness family yeah ei 2 1

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