

The Word of Life
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1 Jn. 1:1-4 ESV

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our [1] joy may be complete.

1 Jn.1:1-4 KJV

¹ 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, of the Word of life; ² (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) ³ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

When John made this profound statement he was restating the prologue in the Gospel that he had composed earlier, the Gospel of John. In fact, the *Book of Revelation* has nearly the same theme, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the one who had no beginnings, but was the Beginning of all beginnings and the End of all endings. He was present at the creation of the universe, the solar system, and the earth, long before man was created and emerged as a self-conscious being in the Garden of Eden. As we come to the ending of an old year that had its share of tragedy and joy, good and bad, right and wrong, we also come to a new year of new beginnings. We come with the baggage of the past that we must somehow leave behind, not allowing it to become a burden in the present, or a hindrance, or a stumbling block to us as we make our new beginnings into a future that God sees but is unseen by us. To do that we must, like the writer of Hebrews tells us, lay aside our superfluous baggage and our besetting sins, and live with a certain patience, looking unto Him who is indeed the Author and Finisher of our faith and the Beginning of all our beginnings.

John is saying, first of all, that our beginnings for this new year need to start with A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST. He is from the beginning, and we need to know Him personally. We need to have touched Him with the hands of faith, need to have seen Him with the eyes of love, dying for our sins, need to have heard Him with the ears of joy and gladness, speaking forgiveness to our souls. When John the Baptist beheld Jesus he cried out, John 1:29"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And even though a special revelation was given to him to see the Spirit anointed Son of God and Son of Man, John too saw Him with the eyes of faith.

The best picture of this one in the *Old Testament* is in Isaiah 53:1-2, where the prophet asks,

¹ "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

²" For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

Isaiah is simply telling us a grand truth about Jesus, that He was a man like other men a real man. But only with the eyes faith can we see that He truly was the Son of God. One who comes to God, must, as Jesus said, come through Him; must believe that Jesus is who He said He was, and that the *Old Testament* prophecies pointed squarely to Him; must believe also that the *New Testament* writers knew who He was; and that the witnesses and martyrs down the ages knew who He was; and that true Christians in this sinful and adulterous generation know who He was and is. Now, if you believe the *Old Testament* is a lie; that Jesus is a liar; that His followers in the NT were deceived; that the martyrs were fools; and that all of us are ignorant simpletons; then you are the biggest fool of all! And there is little hope for you! God have mercy on your poor ignorant soul!

But I emphasize again, ours must be a personal relationship to the Christ. We cannot be a Christian without that personal encounter with Christ, our private meeting with the Son of God, for even the lost demons, who could never be saved, cried out with more faith than some so-called-Christians when they said, "We know who you are, the son of the most high." The demons knew their enemy; but some who call themselves His friends don't even know Him, and one day He will say to them, "Depart from me for I never knew you!" To know Jesus is to Love Jesus, and to Love Jesus is to live a Godly life; for Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

The Word of Life to us is that we have the right beginnings, and that is to know Jesus Personally. We cannot handle Him with our hands as did these first witnesses. We cannot look upon Him with our physical eyes, seeing either His physical body as He lived in Galilee, or His dying body on the cross, or His resurrected glorious body, as did these first witnesses. We cannot hear the soothing voice of this Good Shepherd saying 'follow me!'; nor can we hear the commanding voice of this dear Lord, saying 'Go for me!'. We cannot hear the tremulous voice of this Suffering Servant Savior saying, as did they, 'It is Finished!' But if we are to have the right start to our new days and our New Year, we need a New Life, and we must be acquainted with this One who is the very Word of Life, for He alone, who spoke the world into being, can speak Life Eternal into our being.

Further, the Word is telling us that, not only are we to have a personal relationship with Jesus, we must also, like Jesus, make the Word of Life manifest: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;" WE MUST LIVE ETERNAL LIFE NOW. We must bring the Eternal Life into the secular and the temporal life that we live each day by bearing witness and showing that eternal life in our lives. That might be the New Beginning you need most, the living now of the New Life you have already received from the Lord. Jesus put it like this, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." You are God's sons and daughters: make your witness manifest!

Unfortunately many Christians have an identity crisis. Because they're living in this world, they are too often prone to forget who they are, or, more appropriately, whose they are. Because they are caught up in the many problems of this life, they neglect their spiritual lives. This is so easy for us to do. We have many things that have to get done. So we neglect our Christ Life, put it on hold, meaning of course to get back to it, meaning to get our real priorities straight, but going on day after day, week after week month after month, year after year, neglecting our spirits for the sake of the perishing things we think so important, until we become, for all intents and purposes, spiritually dead, and physically exhausted. Christians can sometimes be so dead to spiritual reality that they are of little real use to the Kingdom of God.

Like the church at Ephesus, Christians can lose their first love. They can be in danger of becoming irrelevant to a hurting world, in danger of losing the joy of their salvation because they keep forgetting who they truly are. Wake up! Realize that you belong to the Lord, and must, like Him, be a light to this dark and dying world. You are His lights, and if you are not shining the world cannot see the Way, the Truth and the Life. Like Jesus, we also need to be a Light to the world. I read an illustration once of an organ grinder whose little monkey got loose on a bitterly cold New York day. The organ grinder found his little friend the next day in front of a painted fireplace frozen to death. The Christian cannot afford to lose his first love and become a painted fireplace. We need to be a real fire. Only a fiery love can consume the sinful heart.

Once we realize that we have a New Life, an Eternal Life, and come to terms with our spiritual selfhood, recreated in the Image of God, once we know that we are children of the Living God, we need to start living more dynamic, more Spirit-filled-lives. We need to do precisely what Jesus told us, and get our priorities straight. We need to 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness'. And when we have done that, when we have put God first in our home life, in our work life, in our social life, in our recreational life, and in our religious life, God will honor and bless abundantly, above all that we might ask or think. I could make some suggestions on what you should do in doing this, but I think that would be an insult to your intelligence, for the Holy Spirit has already told you what you should do, and so has Jesus, and so has the Holy Scriptures. There is no excuse for Christians not to live the Spiritual life openly in the world. If you think you have a just excuse, save it and tell it to Jesus on the day of judgment.

One thing I will say, however, about living the spiritual life--it includes Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, and loving your fellow man as yourself, which, translated freely, means you must serve God with worship and humanity with service, for only a Holy God deserves your worship, but even unholy humanity, of which you are a part, deserves your service. If you will look for ways to serve you will surely find them; and Jesus is always the way to God; and if you will start your beginnings with God and His Kingdom you will be living the Heavenly life here on earth.

Making the Word of Life manifest, and living that eternal life in this perishing world **WILL GIVE YOU THE RIGHT FELLOWSHIP**. Verse three of 1st John 1 mentions three kinds of fellowship: 1. With us; 2. With the Father; 3. With the Father's Son.

I am certain that there will be times of fellowship this New Year's Day, but it will be the wrong kind of fellowship, the fellowship of intoxication and inebriation, the fellowship of sin and drugs and artificial pleasures. Some years ago the pharmaceutical companies found ways to tap into our brains' pleasure centers, and, since then, the world that we know here in East Kentucky has been going downhill. But human beings have been pleasure oriented always, and have devised philosophies like Epicureanism to justify irresponsible behavior. Now they take pills, or crush them and sniff them, like heroin powder is sniffed, and get their artificial highs. They have their moments of pleasure, but I would call their fellowship the fellowship of the damned, for they are damned to the destruction of both death and hell by their morbid behavior.

The great tragedy is that once they become addicted to these drugs they are on death row, for invariably, the wages of their sin is death. Their fellowship is at enmity to God. But the greater sin, the far greater evil is from the people who knowingly get others addicted for their own financial gain. Of course there are other kinds of fellowship among men that is not destructive and may be very good, but compared to Christian fellowship, it palls in comparison.

"Fellowship with us..." We live our lives and declare our faith so that those who see us and hear us can have new beginnings, and have fellowship with us. John was not being proud or egotistical when he said that, but was simply saying that our fellowship is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Koinonia fellowship, the fellowship of His Presence. He is here! He is with us in all that we are, and in all that we do and say. In secular terms, the Holy Spirit is the CEO of the Church that Christ organized. But He is much more, for He in-dwells every believer and brings us to a unity of spirit and peace in Christ Jesus. Ours is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

But it is the fellowship of the Father. When we speak of God as our Father we speak also of all His children being our brothers and sisters, our spiritual siblings. Our Father is a Loving Father. He is totally and perfectly Good and Just and Righteous and will never do anything that will injure us, or harm us, or demean us in any way. He is the only Perfect and perfectly Good Father who eternally and constantly watches out for the true needs of His children. God is Good, and He wants to make us good, like Himself. He wants us to be Holy for He is Holy; so our fellowship with Him is a holy, and wholesome, fellowship. Our Father is a Spirit, the Father of Spirits, and we must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

This fellowship that we have that begins anew each day is also the Fellowship of Jesus, the Son of The Heavenly Father. It was Jesus' death on the cross that created this fellowship of love. It was His resurrection that filled it with hope. It was the sending of the Holy Spirit by Jesus and His Father that made the fellowship a reality. And it became ours by faith. Jesus is everything to us. Listen to what Paul said of Him:

Colossians 1:12-20

¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be

thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; ²⁰ And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Our fellowship is with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinitarian Fellowship.

When we have this personal relationship with Our Lord, and begin to live the heavenly life on earth in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **WE WILL HAVE THE FULNESS OF JOY.** That is just what John said in verse 4: "And these things we write unto you, that your joy might be full."

This Fulness of joy comes, as one commentary says with the Fulness of faith, hope and love. That is true. But it is more than that. It is the Fulness of God. It is the living of the life that we were created to live. It is being Spirit-filled. The more Spirit-filled the Christian is the more joyful he/she is, with more faith, more love, and more hope, living on earth like we will be living in Heaven, our true and final and permanent home.

John could not, however, contain his joy, for his joy was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and, like all the Apostles, John wanted the entire world to know and to have fellowship with the Triune God. John live in the joy of God all his long life, and died praising God. His joy was the same as that hymn we sung last Sunday, Joy to the World the Lord is come, Let Earth receive her King. John wanted the world to know his King! Do you?

May your beginnings in this New Year be for your beginnings in Jesus that will be unending until the return of Christ, and so you will rejoice throughout your life and through all eternity. But, to inherit that eternal joy, you must start living that Joy today. I challenge you in the faith of Christ to live eternally in time! Amen!