

## ***Eternal Life in a Flesh-and-Blood Body***

1 John 1:1-4

Last week we began a series in the book of 1 John. We are encouraging you to read the book of 1 John at least once a week during this series so that John's words, teachings, commands, and logic become intuitive, second-nature to us. Instead of a superficial understanding of 1 John, we want these words to dwell richly within us.

Last week we focused on John's purpose statement for writing this letter we call 1 John. In 5:13 he wrote:

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

John wants to give believers the assurance that they have eternal life. When you know that you have eternal life you have a freedom and a type of humble confidence in your walk with God; if you aren't convinced that you have eternal life, you will be tentative and even fearful in your walk with God. But since John wants us to know that if we believe in Jesus we have eternal life, we should read this letter asking God to give us that assurance.

Today's passage is very relevant to John's purpose for writing. In 1 John 1:1-4 John discusses the message he had proclaimed about eternal life. In verses 1 and 2 he discusses the **credibility** of the message about Jesus, and in verse 3 and 4 he discusses the **fruit** of the message about Jesus.

***The Credibility of the Message about Jesus (1 John 1:1-2)*** In these two verses John gives us two specific reasons why the message about Jesus is credible, why it should be believed.

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—

John refers to Jesus as "**that which was from the beginning.**" Eight times in this letter John mentions "the beginning." Four of those times he is reminding them of message they had heard "from the beginning" of their walk with Christ. Something that they'd heard from the beginning had authority, whereas some new teaching is suspect and lacks authority. A new and creative teaching is called a heresy.

Here John refers to Jesus, the word of life, as "that which was from the beginning." John is not only describing the Jesus that they had heard about from the beginning of their journey with Christ. Jesus was "from the beginning" in the sense that **He had always existed**, even before He became a man. John started his gospel (which was one of four biographies about Jesus) in this way:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

There was never a time when Jesus didn't exist; He was in the beginning with God the Father. Jesus is called "the Word" in John 1:1 and "the word of life" in 1 John 1:1. Why is Jesus called "the word"? Words are one of the main ways we disclose ourselves to others. Jesus said that our words reveal the content of our hearts (Matthew 12:34). If you never spoke a word, people would know very little about you; they could guess, but they wouldn't really know if you were wise or foolish, kind or mean, loving or self-centered. But once you speak **words**, they have a pretty good idea about who you are.

Jesus is called the Word of God because He is the ultimate self-expression of God. If you listen to and watch Jesus, you will have a great idea of what God is like. For example, when you see Jesus weeping at the tomb of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35), you know that God's heart goes out to people who are grieving; you know that God weeps with those who weep.

Jesus is called the "word **of life**" (1 John 1:1) because He is the ultimate expression of the eternal life that is found only in God. Jesus was eternal life in a flesh-and-blood body. Notice how verse 2 reinforces that Jesus is the embodiment of eternal 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—

The message about Jesus has credibility because Jesus "***was with the Father***" from eternity past. Then He became one of us to reveal the type of life the Father offers everyone who wants it (***eternal*** life). If you read John's gospel you will hear Jesus saying, "I am the bread ***of life***" that will satisfy your deepest hunger," and "I am the ***living*** water" that will quench your deepest thirst.

The first reason John's message about Jesus has credibility because it's about the word of life that was "in **the** beginning with God" before He become one of us.

The second reason John's message about Jesus has credibility is because it is based on ***firsthand experience***. Notice again how John expresses himself in verse 1.

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—

Jesus wasn't merely an idea or a concept; He was fully human. Their **ears** had heard Him speak and teach and pray. Their **eyes** had seen Him hold little children, heal with a touch, and die on the cross. Their **hands** had touched Jesus' flesh and blood body.

In verse 2 John mentions twice that the life (the eternal life) was made visible/manifest to them.

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**—

Again, Jesus was the visible embodiment of eternal life. Jesus had told them repeatedly, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Why was it so important that Jesus had come with a flesh and blood body? The short answer is that if He didn’t take on flesh and blood, His death on the cross wouldn’t have been an acceptable substitute for sinful flesh and blood humans (see Hebrews 2:14). If Jesus weren’t fully human, He couldn’t be a sacrifice for humans. [In 1 John 4 he will denounce certain “false prophets” who taught that Jesus didn’t actually “come in the flesh.”]

Why is it important to know that John and the other original disciples confirmed His full humanity with their eyes, ears, and hands? The short answer is that it’s hard to dismiss such firsthand accounts. Jesus was well aware of this. In John 20, for example, we have an account of Jesus gladly giving Thomas the opportunity to see and touch His resurrected body. Thomas had not been present when Jesus had appeared to the other disciples on the first Easter morning. In John 20:25 we read of Thomas’ reaction when they told him about the resurrection.

25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Thomas was a “good skeptic”; he was willing to believe **if** he had evidence. Eight days later Jesus appeared to the disciples, including Thomas, and extended this invitation:

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

Significantly, Jesus wasn’t the least bit offended that Thomas wanted to see and touch His body after having risen from the dead. This is one of the main reasons we believe the writings of the New Testament; they were written by people who had experienced Jesus firsthand or by people who were close to people who had experienced Him firsthand. Here we are 2,000 years later on the other side of the world discussing the message about Jesus. The message about Jesus has credibility.

If you are already a believer, the book of 1 John can deepen your faith. You can emerge from this study with a deeper, more confident faith and therefore we great assurance of eternal life. If you’re not yet a believer, the book of 1 John can convince you that Jesus is the Son of God who took on flesh and blood to die for your sin. You can respond in faith and have eternal life.

***The Fruit of the Message about Jesus*** (1 John 1:3-4) In these verses John explains the fruit of the gospel and why he was so committed to sharing it. First, he mentions **fellowship**. We’ll talk about fellowship more next week in verse 5-10.

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.

When you have fellowship with someone you have a depth of relationship because of what you have in common. We experience this on many different levels in many different contexts: in our families, in our work, in clubs and organization, in relation to shared experiences, etc.

John tells his readers, "I am explaining this message about Jesus so that **you** will have fellowship with **us**." That may sound like a strange thing to write, until you remember that wanted them to believe the message about Jesus, be born of God, and experience eternal life. He wanted that common experience of eternal life to bind them together in relationship. We learn in chapter 2 that some had separated from the believing community and were trying to take people with them. John didn't want them to abandon Christ and the gospel but to continue believing the the truth about Jesus and therefore have fellowship with him.

Significantly John adds, "and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." John is reminding them that the gospel not only brings you into fellowship with other believers, but also into fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus His Son! This is the deepest, most enduring fellowship you can have.

This eternal fellowship is the basis for the love commands throughout 1 John. Since the gospel binds us together eternally in relationship with each other and with God, our love for one another should have no limits. In 1 John 3:16 John writes that Jesus defined what love is when He laid down his life for us. Therefore, we ought to lay down our lives for one another. You know you have genuine fellowship when you lay down your lives for each other (time, energy, money, etc.).

Of course we can't have that depth of fellowship and that depth of love with everybody else in the church (or in the body of Christ), but we can and should have it with some. Actually if you don't you're in a dangerous place spiritually. You need people in your life whom you trust who know your temptations and weaknesses and who would lay down their life for you.

Here at Faith sometimes these relationships are formed through life groups; sometimes these relationships just happen. In either case we need to want it and we need to pursue it.

Several years ago a college student took a risk and came to church one Sunday morning because he was interested in a girl who went here. She had made it clear that he didn't have a chance with her unless he loved Jesus. There are worse reasons for going to church. That morning he sat by a man who struck up a conversation with him. Long story short, that man offered him a job and ended up mentoring him for a couple

years. My point in telling that story is that God provides deep fellowship in unexpected ways sometimes.

The second fruit (or byproduct) of their message was **joy**. It's striking what John says in verse 4.

4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

A working definition of joy would be "a deep satisfaction in God and His ways." If you love what God loves and you want what God wants, you will have joy when you see others experiencing God and doing what pleases Him. There is nothing selfish about wanting more joy.

John is simply expressing how satisfying it would be if they believe the message about Jesus and walk in truth (along with them). John made similar statements in 2 John and 3 John. In 3 John 4 he wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." [Paul talked about his joy in Philippians 2:1-2; Jesus talked about His joy in John 15:11.]

Can you imagine having such deep, substantive fellowship with others that **you** experience joy when **they** are walking with God? This type of joy is the byproduct of loving others deeply. Love and joy rise and fall together. If you don't love others deeply you can't experience the type of joy John is writing about. But if you do love others deeply there's the potential for experiencing this type of joy. There's also the potential for experiencing great sorrow and disappointment when you love deeply, but the risk is worth it.

Brenda and I have some friends we love deeply who are going through some tough times - loss, disappointment, confusion; certain aspects of their future is very uncertain. But they're not shaking their fist at God and they're not giving up. **Their** faith and perseverance fills **us** with joy. It's so very satisfying to see.

The gospel - the message about Jesus - is credible and produces this type of fellowship and this type of joy among those who believe.