

The Word of Life

(1 John Series #1)

1 Jn 1:1-4

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Today we begin a lengthy sermon series based on the book of 1 John

1. 1 John was written during a time of great challenge to the Christian faith
2. This was the time when a variety of human philosophies and theology began to enter the church, challenging the historic foundations of the faith
3. The seeds of Gnosticism were beginning to germinate, the effects of which we still suffer today
 - a. Gnosticism takes its name from a word that means “knowledge”
 - b. followers of this philosophy claimed to possess a special, higher knowledge than others, thus making them more spiritual
 - c. worse, it cast doubts on historic Christianity because its beliefs directly contradicted the teachings of the scriptures
 - d. the result was that many who did not follow these pre-Gnostic teachings were left with doubts, insecurities, and the nagging idea that they were somehow missing something in their faith

B. John wrote with several purposes in mind, many of which are stated in the book, but I think we might sum up his purposes by saying that he wanted to reassure believers of the truth of historic Christianity based on historical facts, and grounded in the reality of Jesus Christ

1. John wasn't interested in the re-interpreted Jesus of the Gnostics
2. He was concerned that people be secure in that which had been taught by the apostles

C. Today, we still have many of the same concerns – maybe different specific philosophies and theologies, but the effects are similar

1. We need the reassurance found in this letter
2. We need confidence in the person of Jesus Christ
3. We do not need a theology of human discontent with what God has done and revealed
4. We do need to be sure that salvation is in God's son, Jesus Christ, for everything about the life we are called to live flows from that fact

D. Our series will probably last almost five months

1. I believe you will find it challenging, for John is a deep thinker and he won't leave us on the surface skimming up the easy things
2. You'll find it encouraging, for you will be challenged with the meaning of the fundamental truths concerning Jesus Christ and their meaning in your life

E. Today, we begin with a look at the Word of Life – 1 Jn 1:1-4

I. A FURTHER LOOK AT SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THIS BOOK

A. Because fellowship always suffers when people miss the truth of Jesus Christ

1. 1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. NASB95
2. Note that if the purpose was only to have fellowship with “us” (that is, John and those who believed as he did), it actually might not be such a big deal
3. However, note what John claims – “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”
4. That changes the entire prospect of having fellowship with John, for to be in fellowship with John also means to have fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ

B. Because insecurity over one’s faith always brings worry, concern, even despair

1. 1 John 1:4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. NASB95
2. “Joy is the essence of Christianity.” -- W. Barclay, The Letters of John and Jude, p21

C. Because faulty doctrine always leads to the practice of sin

1. 1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; NASB95
2. John doesn’t suggest (like the Gnostics) that we can be sinless, but he does teach that faith ought to help us sin less!

D. Because the whole trouble begins with false teachers, so we need a way to sift through all the junk to the real truth

1. 1 John 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. NASB95
2. I think we’ll find it amazing who is considered a deceiver and a false teacher in the Bible and who is often tagged with that identity today – it’s not always the same

E. Because turbulent times for Christian faith produces the need for some assurance

1. 1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. NASB95
2. This is the crux of the matter isn’t it? Even today, we need to get our spiritual priorities straight so that we can know we’re saved
3. It is strange that many Christians today follow the thinking that destroys any possibility of confidence that they are saved
4. John wrote to help us for he knew that secure people will be faithful people

II. THE WORD OF LIFE

A. These first four verses are powerful

1. Illustration

David McCullough in his book *Mornings on Horseback* tells this story about young Teddy Roosevelt:

"Mittie (his mother) had found he was so afraid of the Madison Square Church that he refused to set foot inside if alone. He was terrified, she discovered, of something called the 'zeal.' It was crouched in the dark corners of the church ready to jump at him, he said. When she asked what a zeal might be, he said he was not sure, but thought it was probably a large animal like an alligator or a dragon. He had heard the minister read about it from the Bible. Using a concordance, she read him those passages containing the word 'zeal' until suddenly, very excited, he told her to stop. The line was from the Book of John, 2:17: "And his disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.'"

2. The little word "zeal" was powerful to young Teddy Roosevelt – so powerful that it scared the daylights out of him
3. In 1 John, it's a phrase that carries the power – and here it's not one to frighten us, rather it is a phrase that sets the stage for the entire book

B. The focus of these introductory verses is what John calls, the "Word of Life"

1. Watch how he develops the idea he wants to communicate

a. 1 John 1:1

- 1) What was from the beginning
- 2) what we have heard
- 3) what we have seen with our eyes
- 4) what we have looked at
- 5) and touched with our hands
- 6) concerning the Word of Life— NASB95

b. 1 John 1:2

- 1) and the life was manifested
- 2) and we have seen
- 3) and testify
- 4) and proclaim to you
- 5) the eternal life
- 6) which was with the Father
- 7) and was manifested to us— NASB95

c. 1 John 1:3

- 1) what we have seen
- 2) and heard
- 3) we proclaim to you also. . . . NASB95

2. it is obvious that John has something to say about the Word of Life, and whatever it is, there were two important reasons for proclaiming it to his readers
 - a. "so that you may have fellowship with us"
 - b. "that our joy may be made complete"
 - c. more on these later

C. John is laying the foundation for all that he wants to say, and that foundation is Jesus Christ

1. 1 Corinthians 3:11 -- For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. NASB95
2. The foundation is based on John's own personal testimony, something that goes all the way back to Christ himself
 - a. Acts 1:8 -- but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." NASB95
 - b. this is one of the most important of distinctions between historic Christian doctrine and faith and the imaginative theology and philosophy that tries to satisfy all of mankind's questions
 - c. John is going to tell us what really happened
 - d. others will suppose, imagine, postulate, guess, and satisfy only their own limited, finite minds

D. What he wants us to know at the outset of this letter

1. That he has heard Christ
 - a. Jeremiah 37:17 -- Now King Zedekiah sent and took him *out*; and in his palace the king secretly asked him and said, "Is there a word from the LORD?" And Jeremiah said, "There is. . . . NASB95
 - b. John says something even better – there is not just a word from the Lord, there is the Lord who was heard!
2. That he has seen Christ
 - a. he has reference here to the physical act of using one's eyes to see something
 - b. he had seen Jesus Christ – he was no figment of someone's imagination, he was no spiritualized aeon of the Gnostics, he was a man one could see
3. That he has looked at Christ (steadfast, searching observation)
 - a. this is different than just looking at something – this is observation of the kind that leads to an understanding of the meaning or significance of that which is observed
 - b. John 1:14 -- And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we **saw** His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. NASB95
4. That his hands had actually touched Christ
 - a. Luke 24:39 -- "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." NASB95
 - b. John proclaims a living, physical presence and he bears his direct and specific testimony to his readers
 - c. again, it is the classic apostolic witness and we need to hear it today

E. The Word of Life is the source of two of the most important possessions we could ever have

1. Fellowship

- a. basically, fellowship is a sharing in common and a sharing together
- b. would you like to know that you are in fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ?
- c. the Word of Life is the source of that assurance
- d. John's testimony regarding the Word of Life is essential to the faith that puts us into that fellowship

2. Joy

- a. joy is what counters the despair of the world
- b. it is more than happiness, it is deeper and more pervasive
- c. would you like to have real joy in your life?
- d. the Word of Life is the source
- e. John's testimony is essential to finding that real joy

CONCLUSION

A. John 1:1-14

B. This morning, let me remind you of the real Jesus

1. The one who came into the world, born of a virgin
2. The one who grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with both God and men
3. The one who was Immanuel, God with us
4. The one people heard, saw and touched
5. Let me tell you about the Jesus who loves so much he gave his life as a sacrifice for sin that we might find God's forgiveness
6. Let me invite you to consider the Word of Life, the Son of God, the Lamb, the redeemer and Savior
7. You want to be sure of your stand with God? Be sure about Jesus

C. Invitation