

Life That Is Real

1 John 1:1-4

Pastor John Miller

I want to read those first four verses beginning in verse 1 of John. He starts in verse one, "That which is from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled." John says, "Of the word of life. For the life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness and we shown unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. These things, John says, right, we unto you that your joy may be full." Have you ever taken a family photo and then looked at the family photo and started noticing how the children look like their parents?

It's amazing. The other day, my five-year-old granddaughter was over, her name's Madison and she's a daughter of our daughter number two, Bethany. And we were laying up on the bed in our bedroom together talking and I looked over and I saw a photo of her mother when she was the same age and it just absolutely blew me away how much my granddaughter looked like my daughter, she looks like her mother. I go, whoa, it's Bethany all over again. And we see how children many times resemble their parents. I saw a picture of my son, I have a 22-year-old son the other day and I was standing next to him and I go, oh, scary thought. Poor kitty looks like his dad.

Well, the same is true in the spiritual realm. 1 John is a family photo. It's a family photo album and in 1 John, we're going to learn many things. It's a challenge to introduce this epistle. I feel like a little proverbial little boy at the ocean with a bucket trying to capture the whole ocean in a bucket. Impossible. But we're going to learn the marks of a true Christian. We are going to learn what a Christian looks like. What is a Christian? What does the Christian look like? What is the real thing? What is the authentic true child of God versus the imitation or the false? So as John gives us this family photo, he's going to present the nature of God in three areas which we should possess as the children of God. Before we go back and analyze these first four verses, I want to point them out to you I John says that God is light.

Look at it in chapter one and we stop just short verse five. "This then is the message which we've heard of him and we declare unto you that God is what? Light and in him is no darkness at all. "So what is he implying there? He's implying that if God is light, God's children are light also. If God is light or righteous and holy, then God's children walk in the light as he is in the light. If we say we're a child of God, but we walk in darkness, John says we lie and we do not the truth. The truth is not in it. So if you are a Christian birthmark, number one, you will live a life of godliness and holiness, not in order to go to heaven, but because you are a child of God. Heaven is given you the moment you receive Christ and you are born again and the life of God enters your soul. But you can actually live out that Christian life and demonstrate it and be a witness of who God is by the way you live walking in light.

There's a second characteristic of God found in this epistle and that is God is love. Look at chapter four and verse eight for a moment with me. Great verse, "He that loveth not Noah is not God. For God is what? God is light. God is love." So what does that mean? It means if you're a Christian, you're going to what? Love. Some of you're going, I ain't answering, I might get it wrong. Love. You'll look like, you'll be like your father in heaven. An oxymoron say, I'm a Christian, but I'm not one of them loving kind. I'm a mean Christian. I don't like people. Saw a Charlie Brown cartoon once. He said, he goes, "I love humanity. It's people I can't stand. They cut in line, they yell at me, they honk at me on the freeway, give me hand signals and things like that. It's hard to love those kinds of people."

But if you have been born into God's family, you receive God's nature. God is light, you walk in holiness. God is love, you walk in love. Jesus said by this shall all men, know that you are my disciples that you have what? Love one for another. He didn't describe our haircut or to the clothes we wear or the color of our skin or where we live. He said, love is the birthmark of the believer. If you're not loving, then you haven't been born into God's family. And then thirdly, God is life. God is life. God is love, and God is light. Look at chapter five and verse 11. We'll get there in about 14, 15 weeks. Chapter five verse 11, "This is the record that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in who? His Son."

So God has given to us eternal life. That's why we are calling the series life that is real life. That is real means that I will walk in the light, I will walk in love and I will demonstrate the fullness of his life that has been given to me as a child of God. Now, John the Apostle is the author, go back with me chapter one verse one of this epistle. He is now John the aged. We all know about Peter, James and John, called the inner circle. And not that Jesus loved them more, but they had a greater capacity to accept his love and to receive that love. And it was just the same John who laid on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper. He was very near and dear to the heart of the Lord. He says, I'm the apostle whom Jesus loved.

Now, a little footnote, John wrote the gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, same John. He wrote 1 John, 2 John and 3 John, these little epistles at the end of the Bible and he wrote the book of Revelation. The apostle John is the one who wrote revelation. And as a result he wrote most of the New Testament, not Paul, not Luke, but John. Gospel, epistles and revelation, which is interesting. Here's another little footnote, a little teaser before we go on. And that is the gospels we look back and we have the historic account of the life of Jesus Christ. By the way, John's gospel has as its theme that you might believe that Jesus is the son of God and so believing you might have what? Everlasting life. He's the apostle of everlasting life. It's life that is real.

And then when we come to his epistle 1, 2 and 3 John, it's the present Christian life. We look around. How do we live the Christian life? What are the marks of the Christian life? And then we move into his book of Revelation, which is prophecy and we look out into the future. So we look back at the gospel, we look around at his epistles, and then we look ahead at his book of Revelation when we will come to be with Jesus Christ and be perfectly like Jesus Christ. It all surrounds the person and the work of Jesus Christ, God's son. Now John wrote this epistle when he was old, he was possibly in his late 80s, 90s, some say 91, 92 years of age. It was

written about 90-91 AD. And 1 John is the last book of the New Testament to be penned. It was written after the book of Revelation, which was written about 90 AD. He was exiled to the island of Patmos. We visited Patmos recently on our tour there to Greece in Israel.

And then he was let go and back to Asia, which is the area of modern Turkey to the city of Ephesus. Paul had started a church in Ephesus. We have a letter to the believers in Ephesus. And late in life, John, the last living apostle, the only one to die of natural causes was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. And he was old and he was still there and he penned these words. Now, the reason that's significant was because now there's third generation Christians. It's been some 60 years since Jesus was there. You have third generation Christians and their love and their zeal and their enthusiasm was waning and beginning to die. And so John's writing to them because false teachers had crept into many of the churches in Ephesus in Asia, and he wanted to warn them and protect them that they not be led astray by false teachers. Now, the false teaching of these false teachers was known as gnosticism. Big word that basically means to know. It comes from the Greek word gnosis, to know, the word agnostic, the negative prefix before the word means not to know.

Someone says, I'm an agnostic. I don't believe you can know God or you can't know him. I don't know that there's a God, which by the way in Latin is the word ignoramus by the way. Someone says, "I'm an agnostic," and they think they're really cool. You say, "Oh, an ignoramus, huh?" So one of the key words in this whole epistle is the word know, gnosko. It's also translating from the Greek word Gignitis, to know intuitively and to know objectively. So what John is going to say in this book is we can know. We live in a culture today that is bought into total uncertainty. Can't know where you go when you die. You can't know if there's really a God. You can't know the Bible is a word of God and you can't speak authoritatively. You can't say that's true and that's not true. All truth is truth and your truth is your truth. And we live in this relativistic, pluralistic culture today where anyone who stands up and says, this is the way it is, is browned, narrow-minded and bigoted.

But I believe the Bible to be God's inspired and errand infallible word. And I believe that we can build our lives on God's unchanging word. And the Bible speaks with certainty that we can know the truth and the truth will set you free. You can know the truth about God, about Jesus, about life, about death, about heaven, and about hell, and what greater and more important truth is there to know than what happens after we die. Philosophers can't deal with that. Psychologists can't deal with that. Scientists can't deal with that, but God deals with it in his word. And we know that there's life beyond the grave and we have the hope of heaven in Jesus Christ.

Now, these gnostics had a false conception of creation. And this is why, a little background, they believe that all matter, physical matter is evil, everything physical is evil. Your house, your car, your grass, the birds, the flowers, your cat, your dog is evil. I knew that dog was demon possessed, something strange about that animal. But this is a false dichotomy. God created the heavens and the earth and he looked at it all and said, it is what? Good. God said it's good. And Christianity, by the way, apart from eastern religions, because Christianity came down from heaven, Christianity teaches the sanctity of all the life. All of life is sanctified by God and his

word. Marriage, children, food, pleasure, the physical, it's all sanctified by God. We can enjoy life that is real. We can enter into all the fullness of what God has for us. But this gnostic taken from the philosophy of the Greeks of the day and so forth, matter is evil, only spirit is good. So God being spirit could not have created the heavens in the earth.

So what happened was the true God let out this emanation, this power came out from God, this demigod, and then that demigod or emanation let out another emanation and another emanation and another emanation. Until all the way down this line or this chain, there became this little demigod that was so far from God that he was evil and he created the heavens and the earth. This is how you come to know God through knowledge, gnosis, gnosticism. We give you secret knowledge no one else has and we're going to help you work your way all the way back up through these emanations till you find or discover God. Today some will call it navetta. You set in your lotus position, you contemplate your navel and you will find God. They say. I don't think so.

And the Bible says actually that God came down to man, we're going to read it in John's epistle and he manifested himself to us. We don't have to work our way up to God. God came down to us. We can't find God, God found us. And he revealed himself to us and the person of his son Jesus Christ. Now because they believe that matter is evil and only spirit is good, they denied either that Jesus had a physical body and was man, they denied his humanity or they denied his deity, which both are affirmed in the Bible. Christianity in the Bible teach that Jesus is God and man in one person. He's the God man. So they had to either deny his humanity or they denied his deity. And so John is writing this epistle to teach us two things, what God is like in the person of Jesus and what a real Christian looks like. Now because they believed that matter was evil, they believed it didn't matter what you did with your body because it's evil.

God only concerns himself with your spirit. So you can be spiritual and not be holy or walk in light. You can be spiritual but not use your body to glorify God. You can use it for sinful purposes. This is common today. We see on TV all the time, oh, they're spiritual or they're deeply spiritual, but they're living in immoral life thinking that you can still be spiritual and live however you please. That's inconsistent. And so they denied holiness of life or it led to a cynicism which is denying the body and punishing it so you can work your way back up to God, which is a legalistic sense. So it led to license, sinful behavior or legalism, aestheticism on the other side of the coin. So we want to look today at this epistle and discover real life and life that is real.

I want you to note three facts. If you're taking notes, write them down. The life that is real is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The foundation of real life is Jesus Christ. You better be right about Jesus or you don't have life that is real. You can't be wrong about Jesus and right about God. Did you hear what I just said? That's not original with me. So I can say that was profound what I just said. I read that. But it's true. You can't be wrong about Jesus and right about God. We're going to see that in this epistle. We're going to learn what is right about Jesus. First thing we learned is that Christ is real eternally. Jesus Christ is real eternally. I want you to notice with me in 1 John 1:1. If you haven't gone back there, flip back to chapter one verse one. That which

was from the what? That which was from the beginning is Jesus Christ. Now, there are three beginnings in the Bible that are important. Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

I believe that God created the heavens and the earth. You don't have to be a scientist or biologist to know that nothing, something, excuse me, can't come from nothing. If you have nothing, it cannot produce anything. Something cannot come from nothing. Something has to create, there has to be a cause and effect. So either you believe in some form of eternal matter, always has been, always will be. Or you believe in some existence of an eternal God, one or the other. The evolution, I believe in evolution. I believe there was a big bang and boom, we're all here by accident and we just happened to show up billions of years later. Well, what caused the big bang? All these gases came together. Where did the gases come from? I don't know.

They just all of a sudden appeared? Well, that's kind of silly, isn't it? To think that something could come out of nothing. Yeah, but you Christians, you believe that God just came from nowhere. This is what we believe about God because the Bible's God's autobiography. So God says that he always has existed. No one made God. No one made God. He is the self existent, eternal God. Always has been, always will be. This is why he is known as the great I am. Great Jehovah, the great Yahweh, the great I am. So either you believe in eternal matter or eternal God. In the beginning, God created matter. He created the universe, time, space, and matter. He created the world. And then the second great beginning in the Bible, John 1:1, John's gospel, chapter one verse one, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God."

So Jesus is that word, uses the same title for him in this epistle because the word became flesh, verse 14 of 1 John and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten, the Father full of grace and truth. So the beginning of time, Jesus was already there. And now we have our third beginning, 1 John, 1:1, "That which was from the beginning." Christ is real, eternally, always has been, always will be. And the message about Jesus Christ does not change. Truth doesn't change. If it's true, it's always true. If it's false, it's false. And I believe this statement as well. If it's true, it's not new. If it's new, it's not true.

When the gnostics came into the church and I got a secret to tell you, which by the way is a secret initiation into a secret club, and then they'll give you the knowledge. You have to pay 3999 to get in the club, and then they'll give you the secret knowledge how you can work your way back to God. Just say, is this something new truth? Oh yes, it's new. It's a new revelation. No, thank you.

When someone comes says, "I got a new book for you. I got a new pamphlet for you. I got a new religion for you. I got a new faith for you. I got some new belief in God." Say, "No, thank you." If it's new, it's not true. If it's true, it's not new. People look for novelty today, they want something new, tell me something. I don't know. I'm not going to preach anything this morning that hasn't been preached for 2000 years. I'm not going to tell you anything about Jesus that wasn't told you by the apostles in the Bible, because if it's new, it's not true. And if it's true, it's

not new. God can illuminate and open up to your understanding old truths about Jesus Christ. Jesus is number one, the eternal God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three existed eternally in one God, the eternal God. This speaks of what we call the eternality of Christ.

And then secondly, we have his historicity. Christ is real historically because notice what John says in verse one. We've already read it. That which came from the beginning, it was here before the beginning of time, which we heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we looked upon. Our hands have handled of the word of life. He is true eternally. He is true historically. We are preaching the historic Jesus declared by the apostles. Notice the terms he uses. This is because the gnostics denied his humanity. They said he didn't have a real body that if you reached out to touch Jesus, your hand would go right through him like Casper, the friendly ghost. How many old people know who he was? cool guy. Casper, the friendly ghost. You could walk right through the dude or touch him in your hand, go right through him. It's a ghost. And he was a nice guy. But Jesus actually could be touched and felt hurt and seen. He had a real body.

Notice he says, we, that is we apostles verse one heard. Now in the Greek, it's in the present tense, which means we're still hearing. How do we still hear? Through the gospels. Matthew, mark and Luke, John, whenever you read the words of Jesus in red, in a lot of your Bibles, the red letters, you're hearing the voice of God. You're hearing Jesus speak. When you read the epistles, all scriptures given by inspiration of God, you're hearing the voice of God. God is speaking. So John says, "We were there. We were with him." He was an apostle for three and a half years. He heard him. What an amazing thing to hear the voice of Jesus. Can you imagine if they could have recorded that voice? Ooh, tape reel to reel tape. Here's the voice of Jesus. Wow. Because the Bible said no one ever spoke like Jesus did. They sent soldiers to arrest him and they came back all spaced out.

It doesn't say this in the Bible. This is what I imagine happened. They came back and they're just like this. That's the spaced outlook. They go, what happened? Where is he? Why didn't you arrest him? And they said, "Never a man speak like this man." Because the minute they heard his words, they were mesmerized. Never a man speak like this man. They were hearing the voice of God. And we heard that audibly with the ear and then says verse one, we have seen not only seen, but I think this is amazing. How did we see? With our eyes. How else do you see? You notice how he's trying to really emphasize the physical body of Jesus. We heard him. We actually saw him with our own two eyes. It's a figure of speech we use today when we want to emphasize, I really saw, I saw with my own two eyes. We emphasize it. I saw it with my own peepers, checked it out. It's real.

John says, it's not a third eye. I wasn't sitting in a lotus. It's not some esoteric kind of a subjective experience. Kind of sounds like that, but I actually heard them. My ears are fine. I maybe 90, but I can still hear. I'm listening to him. And we actually saw him with our own two eyes. John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth in his first gospel." A lot of parallels between the prologue of John's gospel and the prologue of John's epistle. And then notice he says, we looked upon him. He go, wait a minute,

John. This is a little repetitious. Seeing him with our eyes and looked upon him. The word looked upon literally means to stare at intensely. It means we gawked him. I imagine there were times the disciples just stared at Jesus. I can't believe this is God in the flesh.

You ever woken up with a little child staring at you? Remember when you had small kids and they'd get up before you and you'd wake up and they're about an inch away from you? Daddy you up yet you up yet, dad? I am now. Let's go have breakfast. Come on dad, let's go. They're not injured, they're looking at you. I went on a long trip once when I was on a ministry trip. I was gone about three weeks and I got home late. And I remember waking up one morning and my little daughter, Amy, was just staring at me. Daddy's home. She had this glow and I woke up and it's like, "Amy, you okay?" "Yes." Like whoa. And she was probably about four. And she's just like big smile on her face, daddy's home. She's just looking at me. And I imagine that's what the disciples did quite often when Jesus is just like God is with us. This is amazing. Jesus wakes up like, whoa, dude, give me some space. Because they just couldn't believe.

When they were on the boat on Galilee, and Jesus calmed the wind and the waves and the sea. They said, what manner of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? God is in our boat. God is in our boat. I don't know about you, but I want God in my boat when I hit a storm, don't you? When I'm going through the storms of life, I'm glad that God is in my boat. We heard him, we saw him, we stared at him, and he's not done yet, notice verse one. Our hands have handled the word of life. We touched him. We touched him. Now, one day I plan on reaching out and touching the face of Jesus. And if you're a Christian, you will too. One day you will actually touch Jesus. Faith will turn to sight. But imagine what a privilege John and the other apostles had. They actually hung out with God in the flesh. And there were times that not only did they share him, they went, I just touched God. They actually touched him and he had a body.

And then even after his resurrection, when he physically bodily rose from the dead, Jesus said, "Touch me, handle me. See, a spirit has not flesh and blood as you see me, have." He told Thomas, "Look at my hands. Look at my feet. It is me. I was crucified. Now I've risen again." And Jesus, in that same body, which he was incarnated, but a glorified body now rose from the dead, ascended into heaven. He's exalted at the right hand of the Father. And that same Jesus Christ is going to return to planet earth someday. That's what the Bible teaches. So this eternal God became man that could be heard, could be seen, could be looked upon and could be handled the word of life. Now, notice what he says in verse two. For this, life was manifested. That is the incarnation. The incarnation.

We have seen it, John, we get the point. You've said it before, we bear witness. We show to you that eternal life, keyword life and life eternal, which was with the Father and was manifest unto us. And I want you to notice that verse two is parenthetical. It's in parenthesis. Why? Because it is a summary of verse one. You're going to notice when you go through John's epistle that he says the same thing over and over again, different ways. So verse two is merely a summary of verse one. He says that life was manifested. The life of God, the word of life, the eternal life was manifested. This is the incarnation, and we did see it. We bear witness and we're going to show you, we're going to declare to you that eternal life, which was with the Father, God the Father,

God the Son, and was now manifested unto us. So Jesus is the foundation of eternal life.

Here's my second point, verse three, life that is real is lived in fellowship with God. That eternal life, that manifested life is now in communion and fellowship with us as God's people. Notice in verse three. He says, "That which we have seen and heard," he can't get away from it. He says in verse one, he says in verse two, and he says in verse three. We saw him, we heard him, and now we declare unto you that you also may have fellowship. Here's another keyword in the epistle of John. Fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with who? The Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. So you have fellowship with us as apostles, as Christians. Fellowship with the Father and fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ. Now there's a progression here. He's the eternal God. He's the incarnate God. And he came to fellowship with you and I, amen? He came to bring us into fellowship.

Now, the word fellowship, keyword, understanding this, we are revival Christian, what? Fellowship. It's the Greek word *koinia* or *koinonia*. You know what the word means? Participation. It means to share in common, to share in common or participate. Now, a lot of people get the idea that fellowship is stale cookies and punch in the fellowship hall. When I was a kid growing up in church, just go in the fellowship hall and fellowship and they had punch and bad cookies. I'm thinking certainly the Lord could provide better than this. So now we've graduated. Fellowship is cookies, not cookies, but donuts. Excuse me. Praise God for donuts. Or coffee. Coffee and donuts. Now those things are nice and you can have fellowship while you eat a donut and have a cup of coffee, but that's not Christian fellowship. Heathens can eat donuts. Non-Christians can drink coffee. But only Christians, I emphasize the word only, only those who've experienced the life of God and their soul, only the real, genuine, authentic child of God that has real life can have *koinonia* with God and with others.

And if you want to experience life that is real fullness of joy, walking in the light, walking in holiness, walking in love, then you need to live your life in *koinonia*, in fellowship with God, with other believers and with his son, Jesus Christ. Notice as I pointed out, he breaks it down. He says, "Your fellowship is with us other Christians." You as a Christian need other Christians. If you are a Christian and you are isolated from other Christians and you're not involved in their lives, you're not in fellowship with them, you are not experiencing life that is real. So God has created local churches, local fellowships. Revival Christian Fellowship is one of many local churches in this area, and we congregate to fellowship with God, fellowship with Jesus, fellowship with one another. We share in common. We all have the Holy Spirit. We all have the hope of heaven. We all have the same word. We all have the same life in us.

I was looking out for my office this morning watching people come to first service and I thought, isn't the body of Christ amazing? All the different colors, all the different ethnic backgrounds, all the different social, young, old, middle-aged, all the different dress styles and looks and backgrounds and education, but we're all one in Jesus Christ. Amen. That's what the Bible teaches. You might be in your 80s and you're sitting next to a Christian that's in their teens, your brother and sister in Christ. You have an older sister, you have a younger brother, your brothers and sisters in Christ. You're all one in the family of God, and there's *koinonia* there. This is why

we created life groups in our church. They've got a table by the way. They said, oh pastor, hit the second service, hit the second service. So I'm hitting it. It's not enough for you just to show up on Sunday, and that's a good thing to do, that's commendable. You're singing and worshipping and giving and serving and sitting under the teaching of God's work.

But get involved in a life group. Get involved in a dinner parade. Get involved in a prayer meeting. Get involved in some ministry where you can interact, where you can not only receive but give. And guess what you'll experience? Life that is real. Life that is real in community with your brothers and sisters in Christ. So our fellowship is with one another. It's with the Father. So you go from the family to the father of the family and with his son, Jesus Christ. Now what are we to do with this fellowship? We're to share it with others. Notice in verse two, we bear witness of it, we show it to you. This is their apostolic preaching of who Jesus is. And then verse three, we declare unto you. Paul or John's preaching, we declaring unto you. So you go from manifestation to proclamation. Our experience can be just as real as the apostles. You've seen him, you've heard him, you've experienced him. God becomes real to you and you share him with others. You tell others about him.

Heard the story of a little boy that was a street child and living under a bridge with some other children years ago in New York. And he had gone by this mission and he looked in the window and he saw they were cooking hot meals and the window was kind of steamed up. He looked in as best he can. Well, someone from the inside saw him, wiped away the steam and saw a little boy outside and motioned for him to come in. So this little street boy went inside and they sat him down and he had this huge feast of food, just set out on the table for him to eat and before he started eating, he started to cry. He just started to sob and the mission director said, "Why, son? This food is good. Why would you cry? We brought you in to feed you." And he says, "Because I have a friend that lives under the bridge with me across the street. And I can't eat this food, I can't enjoy this meal unless I can go and invite my friend to come eat with me."

That's such a picture of the Christian. How can we sit at God's table and feast our souls on the goodness of God and not go out and tell others about him. Not share it with our family, with our neighbors, and with our friends. So John says that which we've seen and heard, we declare to you. We proclaim to you. Proclaiming God is light, God is love, God is life, and you can have that too. You can experience that in your soul. Now, the third point I want to make is closing is in verse four. A life that is real is founded on Jesus, it's lived in fellowship with Jesus and others, and it brings fullness of joy. Notice verse four. These things, and that's a key phrase. We find out why John wrote this, epistle, these things write we unto you, we apostles, that your joy may be what?

For me that's kind of, can you dig it verse? That's like, oh yeah, fullness of joy. Not a little trickling joy, but fullness of joy. Do you know that God wants you as a Christian to have joy? You see some Christians, they look like they've been baptized in lemon juice. I'm of Christ of the sour puss. Why is it people think when you go to church you can't laugh? God sanctifies humor. I had a guy in my former church. I thought, why do you even come here every Sunday? He said, "You're too funny." And he looked like he'd been baptized in lemon juice. I don't believe a

minister of the gospel should use humor in the pulpit. It's like, dude, well, you're cracking me up right now. I think you're pretty funny. I didn't say that, but I thought, what is wrong with this guy?

Now, granted, I'm not called to be a comedian. That's not my number one calling, but God made me the way I am. Am I not supposed to be who I am? Someone complained to Charles Spurgeon said, "You used too much humor in the pulpit." He said, "If you knew how much I was holding back, you'd give me credit." Be yourself. Be your best self. Be your sanctified self. God wants to sanctify you. He wants to use your personality, but he wants to sanctify it for his glory. Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of the heart when the king is in residence there. You got that? You show me a joyless Christian and I'll tell you, he ain't a Christian. Because joy is not happiness, it's not based on happenings, it's not based on circumstances. This isn't entertainment.

Why do you want to become a Christian? You don't need to be entertained anymore. You're going to be sitting alone in a room singing to God, praising the Lord, experience his joy. You don't need a TV, you don't need any. I have the Lord. I'm self-contained. It's an artesian well in the soul. It's an artesian well in the soul. I don't have the money that some people have. I don't have the clothes. I don't have the health. I don't have all the wealth that some people have, but I've got God, amen? And I've got joy in my soul. I love to come together with you on Sunday and hear the joy of the Lord in our church. That's a mark of a Christian. That's the mark of a true child of God. People come in here, why are these people all smiling? What they've been smoking? What's in those communion cups? It's the joy of the Lord, which by the way is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You got that?

When the Holy Spirit comes to take residence in your life, guess what his fruit is in your life? Joy, love, peace, gentleness, meekness, self-control too, by the way. I just couldn't help myself. Well, if you're a Christian, the God's given you the Holy Spirit. You can trust in him. The joy of the Lord through his scriptures, through salvation, through soul winning we experience joy. Jesus said this in John 15:11, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." Now, first reason, John wrote his letter verse four, fullness of joy. Let me point these out, we'll wrap this up. The second reason John wrote this letter, chapter two verse one, "These things write I unto you that you sin not." And we'll develop this as we go through the epistle fullness of joy, victory over sin, then notice, then fourthly, he says, or secondly or thirdly, excuse me, he says in chapter two, verse 26, I've written this epistle that you not be deceived. Chapter two, verse 26.

He says there, "These things right I to you concerning them, which would seduce you or lead you astray." So fullness of joy, sin not, not be deceived by the faults, but have the true. And then fourthly, verse five, 11 to 13, turn there with me, chapter five, verse 11. "This is the record God has given to us eternal life. His life is in His son. He that has the son has life. He that has not the son of God has not life." Verse 13, chapter five, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God that you may know." Remember the gnostics said, they knew something. They were in the know. John says, you can know that you have eternal life.

God wants you to know something. He wants you to have fullness of joy. He wants you to have victory over sin. He wants you to be free from air, and he wants you to know that you will go to heaven when you die. I wonder, do you know that? Do you know for sure that when you die, you're going to go to heaven? You know what's popular today? People say you can't know that. That's presumption. Who do you think you are? But you think you know that when you die, you're going to go to heaven? This is what I base my assurance on. The first thing I base my assurance on is this book, the Bible, the Word of God, the Father. The Bible says, if I believe on him, I will never perish, but I will have everlasting life. Do you believe that? There you go, basis for assurance.

There's the second thing I base my assurance on, and that's the work of God the son. Jesus died for me on the cross. Who is Jesus? Eternal God, incarnate God. He died for me on the cross. He rose again. He lives for me. I base my assurance on the Word of God the Father, the work of God the Son, but I'm not done yet. I got one more for you. The witness, the inner witness of God, the Holy Spirit. All three members of the trinity confirm to my heart that when I die, I'll go to heaven because the Bible says his spirit bears witness with our spirit. That we are what? The children of God. I can know that I know that I know.

Do you know? Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior? Have you trusted him? Have you believed on him? Have you put your faith in him? Do you know that if you die today that you would go to heaven? If not, why not? Why don't you right now, right here this morning say, I want Jesus Christ to come into my heart. I want him to forgive my sins. I want him to be my savior. I want to know that when I die, I will go to heaven, and I want to give you that opportunity. I want to give you an opportunity today to say, Pastor John, I want Jesus Christ to come into my heart and forgive my sins.