**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON**

September 30, 2012

1 John 1:1-2:2

Key Verse: 1:3 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Today’s passage talks about Christian fellowship. People want to have fellowship with others because they are lonely. Tom Hanks in the movie, “Cast Away” missed fellowship with others so badly. So he had a fellowship with volleyball, named Wilson. Our fellowship is called “University Bible Fellowship.” It is beautiful because we have fellowship based on the Bible. There are many fellowships in this world; sport fellowship, internet fellowship, drinking fellowship, dancing fellowship, chatting fellowship, shopping fellowship, fishing fellowship, and eating fellowship. Those who have the same hobbies make club fellowship. But these kinds of fellowships are based on individual benefit so they cannot have deep personal relationships, and the fellowship can be easily broken whenever they fail to get along with each other. However, “Christian fellowship” is essentially different because it is fellowship that has spiritual meaning. We can say that our ultimate goal of life is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son forever in the kingdom of heaven. May God bless our 1 John Bible study so that we may have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another.

Look at verses 1,2. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.” These verses look like the combination of John 1:1 “In the beginning was the word…” and Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John talked about “the Word of life which was from the beginning.” “The Word of life” is Jesus Christ. The fact that the Word was from the beginning shows the eternity of the Word. Jesus is the eternal God who was from the beginning. But he appeared to us in a human form. John 1:14a says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This is called the incarnation. John confirmed the certainty of the Incarnation by saying, “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.” The Apostles physically encountered the Incarnated Word of life, Jesus. John directly heard and saw “the Word of life” through having common life together with Jesus. The verbs, “hear, see, look, and touch” confirm personal experience, and authoritative announcement.

Why did John testify with certainty that he saw, heard, looked at and touched Jesus? It is because at that time Gnosticism threatened the truth of the Gospel. Gnostics claimed dualism, that the world is ultimately divided into two opposite forces, that is, good and evil, and that the visible world and flesh is evil while the invisible, spiritual world is good. And they claimed that only those who received mystic, supernatural and superior intuitive knowledge could be saved from the evil material world. They denied salvation by faith as well as Jesus’ incarnation. They asked how a holy God could be clothed with the sinful flesh. So they emphasized the theory of “pseudo-appearance” that Jesus did not have real human flesh, but only appeared to have the human body. Some Gnostics believed that the eternal God came into Jesus and did the ministry when Jesus was baptized with water and departed from Jesus just before he died on the cross. The cult of Gnosticism shook the gospel faith in the early Christians and provoked division in the church. Acceptance of Gnostic dualism made the Christian doctrine of the incarnation unthinkable. John defended and confirmed the truth of the Incarnation of Jesus by testifying that he heard, looked at with his eyes and touched Jesus with his hands.

Look at verse 3. “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” The reason why John wrote this letter was that he wanted to have “fellowship” with them. Here “fellowship”, or “koinonia” in Greek, is derived from ‘koinonos’ meaning ‘fellowship, communion, relationship, share a common life, friendship.’ So koinonia means mutual fellowship. The koinonia in this passage means ‘Christian fellowship.’ Christian fellowship was so beautiful that even Communists tried to copy it by sharing possessions. But they failed because they removed God from their fellowship. Christian fellowship is a spiritual and holy fellowship with God the Father as well as God the Son. Because Christian fellowship is the fellowship in which God the Father and Jesus Christ is the center, there is no danger of division or being destroyed. Worldly fellowship is easily broken when there is animosity among its members.

In the 18th century, England developed capitalism through the industrial revolution. But as a result, the gap between the poor and the rich became huge and many people denied the Word and became corrupted. Even the church became corrupted, compromising with materialism. At that time, there was a small meeting of the “Holy Club” at Oxford University. The meeting was started by Charles Wesley and later his older brother John Wesley and George Whitfield joined. They loved and studied the Bible. At first, they met once on Sunday evenings, but later they met twice a week and then every evening from 6 to 9pm. When they met, they prayed first and studied the Bible in Hebrew and Greek in order to understand it deeply. And twice a week they had fasting prayer. They shared holy Christian fellowship through the word and through prayer. The small holy club became a power source, awakening England, the USA, and the whole world. Likewise, truth- based fellowship has power to change family, campus, nation and later the world. I pray that our small group meetings by Transformers, TBD may change University of Toronto into a holy campus.

So far John mentioned fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Now he talks about how we can have such fellowship. In order to have fellowship with God, we have to know who God is. Look at verse 5. “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you; God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. “ The message John heard and preached is that God is light and there is no darkness at all. Therefore, we have to remove darkness in order to have fellowship with God.

Look at verse 6. “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” The first false claim-to have fellowship with God and yet walk in darkness- probably belongs to Gnostics who have no love for one another, hate their brothers, claim to be sinless, and deny that Jesus came in the flesh. John called them liars and they did not live by the truth. Here “walking in darkness’ means sinning habitually. Though we have sinful habits, we can grow spiritually through holy discipline. Those who walk in darkness live by flesh not by the Spirit. They regard sin lightly and sin habitually and live a double life. Such a person does not fear God and sins in secret. Such a person is a person who does not know God and has no fellowship with God. In order to have fellowship we have to dispel darkness. It means to proclaim ‘war against darkness’ and fight actively against darkness. There is no middle ground in our spiritual battle. Every man has an element of darkness. Negative thoughts, fatalistic complaints, hatred, slander, false accusations, lust, and selfishness are all elements of darkness. We have to fight against these elements. If we don’t fight against them, we will be caught by the power of darkness and become slaves of darkness. St. Augustine became a slave of darkness when he enjoyed his lust. But when he held on the word of God, fighting against darkness, he was changed and became a new man and a great servant of God who shone the light in a dark age. He wrote the book called “The City of God” and defended Christianity from false attacks.

Look at verse 7. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” We cannot have fellowship with God when we hide darkness in us because fellowship with God is personal and intimate. In order to have fellowship with God we have to walk in the light just as God is in the light. What does it practically mean to walk in the light? First of all, it is a life of repentance. In this wicked generation, people are sick with uncommitment. In an uncommitted relationship, people have to pretend that they are perfect. Otherwise, the other person would think that he or she met a wrong person and try to get out of the relationship. There is no fellowship between them. Many students go to many parties to have fellowship with others. But they feel lonely because everyone is pretending to be somebodies and they have to make plastic smiles, pretending to be happy. Only in Jesus the incarnate God, we can have true fellowship with others.

Look at verse 7 again. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” We don’t have to pretend because we know that we are all sinners. We pray for each other’s weaknesses and work together for the glory of God. We have to know that there are no good sheep: There are no good coworkers. But when we bear with others’ weaknesses, we begin to realize how terrible sinners we are and how much God bore with our weaknesses. We begin to understand God’s great love in being with us in spite of our sins.

Secondly, walking in the light means to live an uncompromising life. We should not compromise our faith by loving the world and its desires. 1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” If we try to be Christians and at the same time enjoy the world, we cannot but compromise our faith. Things of the world look glamorous and glittering. We want to make a lot of money and live in a big mansion house. We want to have a wonderful romance like in a movie. We want to win an academy award and become famous. If we compromise our faith because of those desires, we are walking in darkness. We have to know that the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. Usually I don’t desire riches. But whenever I travel by plane, I envy first-class seat. It looks so comfortable. I am really tempted, thinking that if I were rich, I would travel in the first class seat. Whenever I am tempted of being rich, I repent and think of Jesus who lived a poor life in this world in order to serve many needy people.

When we truly repent of our sins, the blood of Jesus will purify us from all our sins. Sin, as the obstacle of fellowship, is removed by the blood of Jesus Christ. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and truth is not in us. And we make God out to be a liar. But if we truly confess our sins, God will forgive our sin and cleanse all our unrighteousness. Look at verse 9. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Here we have to know that there are two kinds of forgiveness: judicial and parental forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness is what God grants as Judge. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, God declares us not guilty and frees us from the eternal condemnation because Christ paid it all. The forgiven sinner enters into a new relationship: God is no longer his Judge. Now he is his Father. When a believer commits sin, God is grieved and the fellowship with him is broken. He has not lost his salvation, but he has lost the joy of his salvation. As soon as the child confesses his sin, he receives parental forgiveness and his fellowship with the Father is restored. When we do sin, we have Jesus Christ, our advocate, who speaks to the Father in our defense.

In conclusion, our ultimate goal is to have fellowship with the Father and his Son and with one another. Then our joy will be complete. For that, Jesus Christ died for our sins to enable us to have fellowship with him. I pray that our fellowship may be a heavenly fellowship to build up every member to be a blessing.