

Theme: Faith in Exile

Title: Relationships in Exile - I John 1:1-10

Aim: The importance of maintaining right relationships as exiles.

Intro: John Donne wrote the famous poem entitled, “No Man is an Island” in 1624. From poetry.com we read: “The poem explores the theme of interconnectedness and the shared experience of humanity. The speaker argues that every person is connected to others, and that each individual's experiences and actions have an impact on the larger community.” If that is true of the larger world community, it’s even truer of the community of the Church. It’s been suggested that I John, which we begin to explore today, is an epistle written about relationship – right relationships & the maintenance of those relationships. That’s not all that John addresses, but it is a major topic. Theme: Faith in exile. As Christian exiles living in a world not our own, the importance of right relationships cannot be overstated. As Christians, we need God & each other. I John 1:1-10 [READ]. John doesn’t identify himself as the author of this epistle, but has long been recognized as such by the Church throughout history. John was well known to those to whom he wrote, so he didn’t need to id himself. Also, John didn’t address this epistle to a specific church in a particular city. Most likely it was intended as a circular letter written to churches in the greater area of Ephesus, where John was bishop & thus had authority over that collection of churches. John wrote this epistle sometime after he penned his gospel, but before the book of Revelation, so sometime between 90-95 AD. John was a pastor at heart & he wrote to combat false teaching, particularly Gnosticism, which denied the humanity of Jesus Christ, denied the incarnation, that Jesus was God in flesh appearing. John was concerned w/his readers’ relationship w/God & each other, & how the false teaching was affecting them. I) **The most important relationship for exile or anyone is relationship w/God thru faith in Christ.** This apostle beloved by Jesus wrote of what he knew by experience. Remember how he began his gospel: *“In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was w/God, &*

the Word was God" (John 1:1). Here he begins by saying, "Let me tell you about what was from the beginning & still is. I know because I heard Him, saw Him, touched Him." When he spoke here of the beginning, I think he was referring to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, when John, along w/others, was called by Jesus to follow Him. John understood this Jesus to be "the word of life," the revelation of God to man. David Gudzik wrote, "For the Jew God was often referred to as the Word because they knew that God perfectly revealed Himself thru His Word. For the Greek, their philosophers had spoken for centuries about the LOGOS – the basis for organization & intelligence in the universe, the ultimate reason which controls all." Jesus is the Word, the Logos. He was/is life – "***In Him was life, & the life was the light of men***" (John 1:4) John was saying there is no life, in essence, w/out Christ. One may live physically, but we are spiritually dead & bound for eternal death apart from Christ. This life was made manifest to John & the apostles/disciples. John said, "I've seen it/Him & testify to you about it/Him." Gudzik wrote, "The implications were enormous because they said that the eternal God became accessible to man in the most basic way, a way that anyone could relate to. This eternal One can be known, & He has revealed Himself to us. John's words have the weight of eyewitness evidence" & they debunked the dangerous teaching of Gnosticism – that Jesus Christ (the Messiah of God) was not man & therefore could not have been true Redeemer. John was writing to believers, some of whom had been scattered & therefore were exiles who settled in the area around Ephesus. Others were believers who were from the Ephesus area, converted under Paul's or Timothy's or John's or others' ministry. They were still exiles in an unbelieving world (as are we!). He said he was telling them what he had seen/heard/experienced. "Don't fall for the false teaching of Gnosticism. There's no life there. I'm declaring this truth to you, whether you've heard it before or are hearing it for the 1st time, so we can be on the same page spiritually, & in the same relationship together. Our (Apostles? Elders in Ephesus?) joy is complete if you are

in the fellowship of faith w/us. There's nothing more important than relationship w/God thru faith in Christ. Just a side note: exiles are placed by God where we are that we might help one another & make Christ known. But as John Brown, a speaker at Camp Accovac when I was a teenager, simply but profoundly stated, "You can't give what you don't have." If you don't have a relationship w/God yourself, you can't help others know Him or grow in Him. II) **The 2nd most important relationship for the exile is relationship w/others in Christ.** Our relationship w/each other has its roots in our relationship w/God. The manifestation of that relationship is fellowship (w/God, w/each other in Christ). Koinonia: joint participation - participating together in our common relationship w/God gives us fellowship w/each other. There is no true fellowship w/each other in Christ w/out fellowship/relationship w/God. But if each of us has relationship w/Christ & therefore His Holy Spirit dwells w/in us, then when we connect w/each other – 1 on 1 or collectively – fellowship happens naturally. On the other hand, we must cooperate w/the Holy Spirit & choose fellowship & choose to maintain fellowship. III) **Our fellowship w/God & each other in Christ is the fellowship of light.** John stated: "God is light & in Him is no darkness at all." So, "if we say we have fellowship w/Him while we walk in darkness, we lie & do not practice the truth." As said before, Gnosticism taught that only the spirit mattered, so live as you want physically. Anything goes, no holds barred. That's the culture these exiles lived in. That's the culture we live in. That's why we need to maintain our fellowship w/each other & even more important w/God. We can't seek fellowship – joint participation – in 2 opposites worlds. To walk in darkness is to have a pattern of living ignorant of divine things & human duties & practicing ungodliness & immorality. If you walk in darkness you're deceiving yourself, possibly about your relationship w/God & certainly about your fellowship w/God. Note the subtle but important difference. We can have relationship w/God thru faith in Christ & not be walking w/Him at any given time – not walking in the light. If that's the case our relationship is in question – "You shall

know them by their fruit.” If the truth is not in you, you have no relationship – so, we should make sure of it. But we can have relationship w/God & be off track, enslaved to sinful habits which we’ve given ourselves to & which must be forsaken. However, we cannot have fellowship w/God & be practicing sin. I know it’s a fine line, but the line is there. But, John said, “if we walk in the light” – a generally obedient life w/out harboring known sin or resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit – then “we have fellowship w/one another...” - each of us in relationship/fellowship w/God, w/light & thus w/each other. That’s what the Church needs & what the world needs to see. That’s what it means to bear the light of Christ, pointing others to Christ as they see us loving God & each other, maintaining fellowship/unity. IV) **How do we maintain fellowship w/God** (& thus w/each other)? One of the ways is to keep short accounts w/God (& each other). But let us understand: God keeps the believer – He ***“is able to keep you from stumbling & to present you blameless before the presence of His glory w/great joy...”*** (Jude 24). ***“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”*** (Phil.1:6). However, humanly speaking we are responsible to cooperate w/God & maintain fellowship w/Him (& each other). Gudzik wrote: John introduced the idea of walking in the light & being cleansed of sin but he did not believe that a Christian can become sinlessly perfect.” Tho we may not be living a life of sin (hopefully not – we don’t have to – Rom.6), we still will battle temptation & struggle w/the pull of sin. Don’t deny it & deceive yourself. For the Christian, sin does not break our relationship w/God, but it does break our fellowship w/God. Thankfully, God has made provision in this wonderful promise of vs9. To confess means to agree w/ - agree w/God that sin is sin, not how He wants you to live, not according to who you are in Christ, not following Jesus. And, agree that your sin is forgiven because of what Christ has done. To forgive means “to send away or give up a debt, to keep no longer.” God doesn’t keep an account of our sin anymore if we are in Christ. He doesn’t hold it against us anymore because He nailed it to the cross

(Col.2). And, our sin is not forgiven because we confess (forgiven because Jesus paid it all) but confession is still important if we would maintain relationship/fellowship w/God. Fellowship is broken by sin so that we cannot enjoy our relationship. Same is true between believers. And if God is faithful to forgive, shouldn't we be faithful to forgive as well? So we confess & receive forgiveness & cleansing. Don't let sin go unconfessed, undealt w/. Of course, confession must include repentance because we can't continue on the same course of sin if we would enjoy fellowship w/God. As Christian exiles, our most important relationship is w/God. 2nd only to that primary relationship is the relationship between believers (including believers w/in an organic family – double bond that must be maintained). We must be diligent to maintain our fellowship w/God & w/each other, because we need Him & each other. All of this takes faith – faith in exile.