

Sermon Outline for FBC May 19th, 2019

“A Letter to the Church!”

Good morning!

Today my message is entitled “A Letter to the Church!”

I hope to present an idea for the church to consider. Not just this church family at First Baptist but the whole New Testament church of today. I asked God what He wanted me to share with you and this is the answer I received.

A quote I found but do not know where it comes from, states a point that fits today: “If you are more fortunate than others, build a longer table, not a taller fence.”

I am sure there are those who will say many things about what this means, in light of today’s societal outlooks.

I am making this observation: those who know Jesus must share that knowledge and relationship with all people. We are not to stay inside the walls of the church building and fence.

I chose to look at 1 John after reading a letter written by a young lady to the CBM (Canadian Baptist Ministries) which is printed in their “Mosaic” magazine Spring 2019. (Read Julia’s letter) ¹

Now to our text today! In “The Student Bible, NIV, we find this note about the apostle John’s letter to the Christian church. “When the apostle John wrote his letters, the Christian faith was perhaps 50-60 years old. A generation had grown up in Christian homes, and a distinct subculture was already developing... He directed this letter to people who were already Christians, outlining how that faith should affect a person’s life. God is light, he says, so walk in the light. God is spirit, so worship Him in the proper spirit. God is love; so demonstrate that love to others.” ²

¹ Julia Rhyers, Pg. 12, 13

² The Student Bible, Pg. 1304

1 John 1: 1-4 NIV

1 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.

2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

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.

4 We write this to make our joy complete.

In “The Student Bible,” we find more information on John and his letter.

“John was probably the last surviving apostle when he wrote this book (letter). He lived almost to the end of the first century. But he was not too old to fight vigorously against whatever might corrupt the faith that had inspired him for so many years.”³

One of those fights was with the Gnostics. “Gnostics balked at the Christian concept of God’s becoming human. Because they believed a physical body was intrinsically evil, they denied that a pure God could take on a body.

The apostle John debated in person with Gnostics of his day, and he had gnostic thinking in mind when he wrote this letter. The very first sentence expressly states that the author has seen, heard, and touched Jesus – implying that Jesus could not have been a phantom, or pure spirit.

Aging John roared out against the twin dangers of Gnosticism: immoral living and doubts that Jesus became a man. **True fellowship** is not a secret initiation into a New-Age-type elite, but a relationship with the Father through Christ. And that also entails responsibilities to others in God’s family.”⁴

Today, it seems like we are facing the same society of that first Christian church family. Immoral living and doubts that Jesus was real. How do we roar out against it?

First thing is love – love all the people and care about them.

³ The Student Bible, Pg. 1304

⁴ The Student Bible, Pg. 1308

Reverend Ian Walker, a previous Pastor of this church for over 13 years, passed into glory this past week. My memories of Ian are fond and delightful. Now Ian is singing in his Irish lilt with all the angels in heaven and I would believe that he might even be pulling a few jokes on them.

Ian was a Pastor of love as he preached of God's love, lived love in his life, demonstrated love in his actions and truly loved all people.

His encouragement and love were a big part of God's preparing me to continue that love of people in this church family.

Ian would have written a letter just like John did, even starting it the same.

We need to love, and we need to stand up for what we believe of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1 John 1: 5-10

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.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

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.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Our life is to be in the light, not the darkness. When we concentrate on following Jesus, the dark cannot overcome us. It can buffet us and cause our path to be tough, but the light will remain with us.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 NIV

Fellowship is a way to stay in the light and to help others to stand firm for Christ. John's letter clearly tells us how to live in this world. He walked, talked, touched and lived with the Lord Jesus Christ. We can take his testimony as a path to follow.

Looking at today's potluck after church and our neighborhood BBQ coming on June 2nd after church, I see this family building a longer table! When we fellowship together, we help to build each other up in faith. When we invite

those outside the church to lunch, we are doing exactly what God wants us to do, what Jesus taught us to do.

Bibliography:

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Julia Rhyers, A Letter to the Church (Mosaic Magazine, Spring 2019, A publication of Canadian Baptist Ministries, Mississauga, ON
