

The Fellowship of Light

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Now let's turn in our Bibles to the book of First John. First John chapter 1. This morning I'm going to speak on the subject of the fellowship of light. The fellowship of light.

You remember that God the Holy Spirit by the Apostle John in this epistle, this short letter, is revealing the foundation and the basis and the boundaries of true Christian fellowship. He stated it in verse 3 of chapter 1 when John speaks of "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto to you." That which we have seen of Christ in the ministry of his truth; that which we've heard--that you also may have fellowship with us. Fellowship of the brethren; fellowship of the church; God's elect; the redeemed, the justified; the regenerated, the called; those who are preserved by the grace of God and who will be glorified--called up together with Christ, his church, his bride. And he says, "And truly our fellowship is with the father and with his Son Jesus Christ." That's the basis, the foundation, and ground our fellowship with each other. Is it the fact that we are truly in fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Because true Christian fellowship, partnership, family, company, citizenship--all of those things that we mentioned last week--is established in that fellowship that we have by the grace of God. Through the redemption that we have as accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ as he died for our sins. It's in the grace of God. It's a fellowship of grace. And our fellowship with God and with each other is obtained by, founded, and established in the Lord Jesus Christ. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in him."

The question might come, then, how can I know that I truly am in the fellowship of God's grace? How can we all know that our fellowship is truly with God in Christ? That's a good question. There are many types of fellowship around the world. Religious, irreligious, based on many different things. What I'm concerned with is we study through this book of God's Word, is this. What is the fellowship of the church? What is the fellowship of Christ? And how can I know that I personally am part of that fellowship?

We spoke of being partakers of the divine nature. And somebody asked me, "Well doesn't that refer to the new birth, regeneration?" Yes it does. And what it means is this--that by the power of God's grace through the Spirit who applies the gospel message, the promises of God, to our hearts, our minds, affections, and will. We personally are brought into fellowship with the divine nature himself--God the Father, God the Son, and

God the Holy Spirit--just like John is saying right here. Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son. We do become partners, fellowshippers, sharers with the divine nature, as we look to, as we believe in, and rest in, as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ as he dwells within us by his Spirit, and by his Word. And it's fellowship.

And I want to know, and I know you do too, I believe you're concerned with that, how can I really know whether or not I'm truly in the fellowship of Christ? Well the Holy Spirit throughout this epistle gives us four benchmarks, if you will, through fellowship all determined by the very nature of God himself. I mentioned them last week, first of all is the fellowship of light. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Well let me just mention all four of them. The fellowship of light: if you're in fellowship with the people of God, you're in fellowship with the Father and Son; you're in the fellowship of light, for God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. And secondly, it's the fellowship of righteousness, for God is righteous. And thirdly, it's the fellowship of love, because God is love. And then it's the fellowship of faith because God is true and faithful.

But let's concern ourselves this morning with beginning in verse five--1 John 1, the fellowship of light. He says, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you." Now John is saying here this is not a message that comes from a man, from himself; it's a message we heard of him and we can look at it this way. Now some translators translate that "from him," and I believe it can be both. We heard it from him, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the light of God. John 1 tells us that. John the Baptist spoke of that--Christ is the light of the world, Christ himself, the God man. God manifest in human flesh is the light. And we heard it of him and from him. It is a message that has its source in God. Paul said that to the Galatians. He said, "The message of the gospel that I preach is not of man. I didn't get in from Peter, or James, or John. These men, they preach it, but it didn't originate with them. We didn't go to the church, it didn't originate with the church." You know Catholicism says that it originates with the church; it doesn't. It originates with God. He is the truth. God is light, look at it. "And declare unto you that God is light." God is the originator of the message of the light. And in him is no darkness at all.

Now light in Scripture is symbolic of several things. It's symbolic of holiness. We dwell in the light of God's holiness. Now how is that possible for sinners like us to dwell in the light of God's holiness? Well there's not but one way that a sinner can do such. We sang it a while ago. "I'm only a sinner saved by grace." Those two hymns that we sang state the twofold theme of this message--of confession and light. We're sinners saved by grace and we dwell in the heavenly sunlight of Christ and him crucified. And that's the only way a sinner can dwell in the light of God's holiness.

You remember when Isaiah first saw the Lord in a saving view, as recorded in Isaiah chapter 6. He said in the year that King Uzziah died, you remember who King Uzziah was, he was a king who got lifted up with his own pride and power, and took it upon himself to go into the temple where he had no business being because that was only for the priest, the tribe of Levi, and to go in and burn incense in the temple, and some say go into the very holiest of all, which was only the High Priest, and God struck him with

leprosy and he had to be a recluse all the rest of the days of his life. That well respected, that very successful King Uzziah, whom everybody just knew was blessed of God, took it upon himself to go into a place that no sinner has any place of going, into the holy presence of God. And he was struck with leprosy, the most dreaded disease of that time--that disease that pictures sin. It starts from the inside out, because that's what sin is. And God struck him down. And Isaiah said, "When I saw that in the year of the King Uzziah, I saw the holiness of God." And he said, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty." And he said, "I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips." How can man who is nothing but sin and evil approach unto a holy God?

Well, there's not but one way and that's through Christ the Redeemer. That's through Christ the Savior of sinners. That's through Christ who himself is holy and pure and righteous. John says it over here in verse 1 of chapter 2. Our advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous. Our only righteousness is in Christ. Our only hope in this is in Christ. You, listen, you attempt to go to God without Christ, you're doing the same thing that King Uzziah did. That's what he did. And all that can do is expose your sin. So, light here is symbolic of holiness and purity. God is so pure he cannot behold evil. The heavens are not pure in his sight. The psalmist said, "Light is the symbol of God's glory." The effulgence as one old theologian said of his glory--the essence of his glory--who he is. God is light. You notice there it doesn't say God is a light, or even the light. God is light. Everything about him is light and in him is no darkness. There is no darkness in God. Light also is a symbol of God's truth and God's knowledge. God's truth is light.

Back over in Genesis chapter 1, let me just read this to you. The very first thing it says about God in creation after verse 1: "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth," it says the Earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and here's the first words that's recorded that God spoke. And God said, "Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness, and God called the light day and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." Let there be light.

Now that was in the creation of the world. God spoke. Now we know this light is the opposite of darkness. And darkness is a symbol in Scripture, too. Darkness is a symbol of sin; it's a symbol of depravity; it's a symbol of lies; it's a symbol of ignorance. That's what darkness is, evil. The Bible teaches that by nature we are in darkness. That's why we need salvation. David said this, he said we come forth from the womb speaking lies.

Look at the book of Colossians with me. Turn back there to chapter 1. When God saves us from our sins, and actually what this is speaking of here in Colossians chapter 1, beginning at verse 12, it's speaking of the death of Christ on the cross. And I want you to listen to this. When Christ died on that cross it says in verse 12, "We give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [that means qualified, fitted to be partakers, sharers, fellowshippers] of the inheritance of the saints in light." Now the words, by God's grace in Christ, we who are sinful and darkness by nature, and by practice in ignorance and depravity and sin, are made qualified--made fit to be a sharer of an inheritance of saints.

What is a saint? A sinner saved by grace. "I'm only a sinner saved by grace. This is my story to God be the glory." That's what a saint is. I'm sanctified, well, who sanctified me? Well, the Father sanctified me before the foundation of the world, when he set me apart by divine election. The Son sanctified me on the cross when he died on the cross, and put away my sins, "For by one offering he hath sanctified, he hath qualified and fitted all those and perfected those whom God has sanctified." And then we're sanctified by the Spirit in regeneration when he raises us from the dead spiritually and shines that light into our hearts. But look at verse 13: he says, "God who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," now his kingdom is a kingdom of light. Think about this, Christ is the very light of God.

Go back to that Scripture that brother Joe read in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, I want you to see this too. This is the essence of the fellowship of light, right here in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. And I want you to consider several truths that are brought out in this passage. He says in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 4, he says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Now they're in darkness. They don't know Christ, they don't know the light, they've not seen the light. And it says in verse 4, "in whom the god of this world," that's referring to Satan who's the father of lies, "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Right here in this passage we see that salvation is not by the free will of man. And it's not by--salvation is not a choice you make, it's a place that God brings you to. It's a persuasion God brings you to. But I'll show you why here. He says, "In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."

Now, if you're a believer today, what were you before you were a believer? You were an unbeliever. That right? Now that makes sense, that's what Scripture teaches. Well, what made the difference between you as an unbeliever, and somebody else as an unbeliever? Who brought you to the light? God did. And look what he says here. He says in verse 4, "And them which believe not lest that light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them, for we preach not ourselves," (we're not trying to promote ourselves, exalt ourselves, and we're not preaching salvation conditioned on ourselves), "but we preach Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Now look at verse 6. Remember we're back in Genesis, God said, "Let there be light"? Look at verse 6 here. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness..." That's talking about creation. Well that same God who created the world hath shined or is he "who hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It's God who gave you the light. You didn't have it by nature, you didn't get it because you're better than somebody who didn't believe. You didn't get it because you were on some kind of a high search. God shined in your heart by his Spirit. And what did he show you--how perfect you are? Is that what he showed you? Look back at 1 John 1. What did he show you? He showed you how perfect Christ is. He showed you the glory of the Savior. He showed you how sinful you are, how wretched and rotten and vile you are. And he showed you how great and glorious and holy and merciful he is in the Son. That's what he did.

Look back here, he says, so when we speak of the fellowship of light, see we're speaking of the fellowship of God who is light. We're speaking of the fellowship of Christ, God the Son, who is light from God, who is the light of the glory of God. It's the fellowship of the Spirit, the Scripture says, because it is the Spirit who shines in your heart to show you the light, puts the light within you. It's the fellowship of truth and knowledge, the Word of God in Christ. It's the fellowship of faith in Christ, it's a mutual admiration society all admiring one person, the Lord Jesus Christ and him alone. It's the fellowship of love. For we love one another because he first loved us. Herein is love, John said in 1 John 4:10, Not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be our sin-bearing sacrifice unto blood--for our sins--propitiation.

It's the fellowship of humility for we are all, if we're in this fellowship we're submitted to Christ--that's right. We're submitted to him and his righteousness as that which alone saves us, keeps us, and entitles us to heaven. It's the fellowship of obedience and faith; the fellowship of light is the fellowship of truth and knowledge, as it is in God who reveals himself by his Spirit in Christ. And our fellowship with the Father and with his Son, and our fellowship with each other must be grounded in the truth that God reveals of himself. How do we know we have the same Father? How do we know that? Only based upon what the Father reveals of himself in this Word, so that when one comes along and he speaks of his heavenly Father, yet he begins to describe him in ways that are opposed to the Word of God, what do we conclude? We don't have the same Father. How do we know we have the same Savior? You know the Bible says there are false christs.

I had a man tell me one time, he said, "Why do you want to deal with things like that? It doesn't matter; we all believe in Jesus." And I said, "Well read 2 Corinthians chapter 11." He said, "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus." I quoted it to him first and he said, "That's not even in the Bible." 2 Corinthians 11, read it. "...he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, and another gospel, by another spirit..." Paul wrote to the Galatian church in chapter 1, he said, "For if he that cometh preacheth any other gospel than we have preached, though he be an angel from heaven, [or an apostle], let him be anathema." How do we know we have the same Savior? See, that's where the fellowship is. It's in the light. How do you know we have the same Savior? Based upon what the Word of God says of the Savior here, concerning who he is, concerning what he has accomplished, and concerning why he did it, and where he is now. And the fact that he's coming again, to take us up, that's how we know. So that if we speak not according to this word, what does the Old Testament tell us? In the book of Isaiah chapter 8, and verse 20, "If they speak not according to this word, there is no [what?], there is no light in them." "To the law and to the testimony," Isaiah said, that means that the light you're going to have by the power of the Spirit in Christ is going to be according to the law and to the testimony of God, and if it's not according to that, then there's no light. Well, somebody says, "You have your way of interpretation, and I have my way." My friend, the Bible tells us the rules of interpretation, not you, not me. You see what I'm saying? The people just don't want to receive it because the God of this world has blinded their minds.

Now if the God of this world has not blinded your mind today you have one person to thank for that, and that's God alone. Salvation's of the Lord. He sent the light. Somebody

said He turned on the light switch. One man said it's like this, it's like a bunch of people sitting round in a dark room, and they can't see themselves, and they can't see each other. Somebody comes in, turns on the light switch, and they look around and they see all over themselves nothing but putrefying sores, running sores, just the awfulest messy, whatever. They see each other, but they see it in themselves. And they look around the room, and there's one man standing in the center, who is perfect. Pure light. No sin. And they look at him, and some of them run to him, and fall down at his feet. And that leprosy is removed. Those sores are removed. Some just sit there in their chair, still looking around. Because they still can't see, they're blind. You see what I'm saying, that's the way it is. When God turns on the light switch, you'll see your sins, and you'll see the glory of Christ, and you'll run to him. You'll run to him. What is the light? Well, it's the truth.

Go back to 1 John 1. "This, then, is the message," verse 5, "which we have heard of him, and declare unto you." It's a message, it's a message of truth, it's the gospel. When we speak of fellowship of faith, we have to understand that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," ain't that right? Romans 10:17. When God brought them into the church after Peter preached that message at Pentecost, it said they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. That's the gospel of God's grace in Christ, how God saved sinners--by his grace. It's forgiveness by the blood of Christ. It's justification by the righteousness of Christ. It's the new birth by the Holy Spirit. Paul spoke to the Philippian church about being steadfast together, arm in arm, in defense of the gospel, that's fellowship. And then we just read of those whom God has spoken, and shown the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It's Christ and him crucified. Who is he? He's the God-man. He's God in human flesh. He's the perfect substitute, the sin bearer who took our sins to the cross. He was crucified for sins that became his only, by God charging them to his account, and he drank damnation dry, he paid the debt in full, he satisfied law and justice, he made an end to sin, the Scripture says. He finished the transgression, and he brought in everlasting righteousness, and justified all of his people. This is how God, our holy and just and righteous God can remain holy and just and righteous and still save sinners in mercy and grace and love. That's how God can be just and justify.

This fellowship revolves around this question: What think you of Christ? Whose Son is he? What did he accomplish? What is it to walk in the light? Now beginning at verse 6 John gives us a series of "if" statements. And he says if this happens, then this is the result. And there are negatives and there are positives. There's a negative and a positive. And it sets the tone for the whole epistle. It's a very short letter. And what John establishes here is this: what he is talking about here is opposites. He's talking about the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. He's talking about the difference between a sinner saved by the grace of God, and a sinner still lost in his sins. He's talking about the difference between one who is regenerated, and called by the Spirit, and one who is still in a state of unregeneracy. He's not regenerate; he's not born again. That's what John's talking about. These are opposites. And what he begins with is there are those who walk in light, and then there are those who walk in darkness. And this is the issue.

Now there's two things that first set the tone for what it is to walk in the light--there's two things. The first one is this: an honest and open confession of my sin. If you walk in the light of truth, the light of Christ, the light of God, you have truly seen yourself for what you are. I have truly seen myself for what I am. We haven't seen the lowest degree of it, or you might say the highest degree of it, or the deepest degree of it. I'm afraid if we saw ourselves the way we truly are in the sight of God, as sinners, it would sicken us--just like those lepers sitting around in the room. But if we're walking in the light, we're walking in an honest and open, not a hidden, concealed, but an honest and an open confession of our sin. And secondly, if we're walking in the light, we're walking in a bold confession of the glory and the power and the grace of God in Christ. Now that's where it begins, walking in the light. We sang it. "I'm only a sinner saved by grace." That's the confession of sin. And heavenly sunlight, that's the bold confession of Christ.

Look at verse 6; he says, "If we say, [or if we were to say] that we have fellowship with him," with God in Christ, and walk in darkness, what are we? We're liars. "We lie and do not the truth." Now that's the first negative. What is he saying here? A profession without practicing the truth is a lie. That's what he's saying. It's a lie. And this term, "Do not the truth," now this is a common term in the book of John and the book of first and second and third John. "Do not the truth" that sounds kind of strange, because we normally think of something of the truth, that the truth is something to be believed; something to be heard; something to be admired; something to be agreed with; something to understand. But John speaks of it as something that we do. Now what he shows here is the nature of faith--true saving faith and what it really is to believe, it's not only to know the truth, it's not only to admire it and agree with it, it's not only to understand it, but it's to do it. It's to live it. Truth is revealed by God, truth is known by the power of the Spirit, truth is believed by the gift of faith, and truth must be lived. In other words, it's not just something as a sideline, it's your life. Peter said that when the multitude left the Lord, and he turned to his disciples, and said, "[Will] you go away, also?" Peter said, "Where--to whom shall we go? You have the words of life." He didn't say, "Well you've got some real quaint moral sayings that go over well in the sermon." He didn't say, "Well I'm writing a book and I'm going to add what you say to it." No--he said, "Well, you've got the words of life, this is my life," that's what he's saying. And that's what John is saying here. Those who have a profession of Christ without the truth, and without doing truth, they're liars.

Now what's the problem? Go back to John chapter 3, and listen to the words of our Savior. He'd just spoken to a man named Nicodemus, and he said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." Well why is that? Because that which is born of flesh is flesh. Flesh and blood will not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Man by nature will not receive it. It takes the power of God's grace by the Spirit of God for a sinner to see himself as he really is and to see the glory of Christ and submit to him and believe him. Faith is the gift of God; repentance is the gift of God; humility is the gift of God. These are all gifts from God. Well, why do we need to be born again. Well, look at verse 19 of John chapter 3. Christ says this, he says, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world," and here's the problem. "Men love darkness rather than light." Can you imagine loving

darkness more than light? Would you rather be in the dark, or in the light? Would you rather walk into a room that's fully lit, or into one you can't see all the obstacles you might stub your toe on or you might trip over? See the right path to go? See where the door is? Which would you rather be? But here you say, "Well, obviously I'd rather be in a lighted room, well-lit room." But spiritually, when it comes to spiritual matters, by nature, men love darkness and hate the light. Now why is that?

Look on verse 19; look at the last words of that verse. "Because their deeds were evil." That's why men by nature hate the light. Now what does that mean? What are those deeds that it's speaking of? Now those deeds, now remember who he's talking to here-- he's talking to a man named Nicodemus. Now Nicodemus was a Pharisee. What is a Pharisee? He's a moral religionist. He's a serious religionist. I mean he's not just an every-other-day religionist. I mean it's every day for him--24/7. And not only that, Nicodemus was not only a Pharisee, a moral religionist, he was a member of the Sanhedrin. That means he had risen in the ranks by his accomplishments and his deeds. When the Bible mentions the word deeds, in most contexts it's speaking of deeds of law, and it's describing men and women who are doing their dead level best to keep the law. And all the time, the darkness that therein is this, they imagine and believe and trust that their deeds, or their best efforts at those deeds will recommend them unto God--will save them from sin--will make them holy and righteous.

That's why the Bible's adamant in the preaching of the Gospel that by deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. So that when the gospel light of Christ and him crucified is preached, what does it do? It exposes us for what we are by nature--sinners. And it exposes the fact that our best efforts at religion and morality and law keeping are inadequate, even evil in the sight of God as far as salvation is concerned. Why the evil, if you're sincere? Because they become a rival and a denial of what Christ accomplished in the glory of God. So that when that light shines and exposes those evil deeds which men by nature, they are so proud of. "Oh preacher, I've got the Sunday School pin, never missed one. I've been baptized, I've walked the aisle, I've rededicated, I've given my tithe." My friend, all of those things when aimed at attaining or maintaining salvation and rewards are evil in the sight of God. That's the darkness that men love. "Just leave me alone, let me think what I want to think. You're upsetting too many people." The Pharisees said of the disciples, "They've turned the world upside down." Not because they were out there preaching against drunkenness and murder, which we do, we preach against those things, but because they were preaching against self-righteous, free will works religion. And that's the darkness that men love. That's the refuge that they'll run to. You remember when the book--and God said through the prophet Isaiah, "I'll sweep away the refuge of lies," that's what the Gospel light does.

Well look at verse 20 in John 3. He says, "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light." Now what is it to do evil here? Well, it's anything that's opposed to God's way. God's Word. It can refer to any sin, even the sin of trying to work your way to salvation; even the sin of trying to establish your own righteousness before God--even that sin. And he said, "Lest they hate the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved," that means uncovered, discovered. You see it takes the Gospel light to

discover those kinds of deeds. Most preaching today will not uncover that kind of thing, because it's not light. Most preaching today that comes in the name of Christ actually promotes those evil deeds--have you noticed that? Just listen to it sometime. I'll tell you, it actually promotes sinners thinking of themselves too highly. Any preaching, now listen to me, any preaching that diminishes the person and work of Christ and exalts the sinner is darkness. I don't care what it says, it may say sovereign grace, I don't care. I believe in sovereign grace, there's no other kind, is there? Is this Bible teaching any other grace but sovereign grace? It's got to be sovereign grace because it's from a sovereign God. God's in control. But any preaching under whatever guise that diminishes in any way the person and work of Christ, and exalts the sinner, I don't care if they thank God till they're blue in the face, or say it's in his name and for his glory. If it diminishes the person and work of Christ and exalts the sinner, it's darkness. Mark it down.

Now look at verse 21, "But he that doeth truth." Now you remember what John said over there in 1 John 1:6, "He that doeth truth," he says, "He cometh to the light." What light? The light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The light of how God saves a sinner like me through his beloved Son on the cross, who died and was buried and rose again the third day and ever lives to make intercession for me and still reigns and rules and disposes over all things--as our advocate, as our Lord--and it says that his deeds may be made manifest, now look at this, don't miss this, that his deeds may be manifest that they are what? Wrought in God. Literally, the work of God. I'm going to tell you something, if anything's good about any of it, it's God. All right.

Now that's why those who have a profession of Christ, but who walk in darkness, and what he's saying, look back to 1 John 1, "They continue to walk in darkness, and they have no valid claim, they lie and do not the truth." Now look at verse 7, "But if we walk in the light as he in the light," he is in the light, walking in the light of Christ, and that he there is referring to Christ the Father and the Son, the Godhead in the light, we have fellowship one with another. And listen to this: "And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." You see that?

Now that walking in the light there--he says that if we walk in the light, it's not our walking in the light--listen to this now--it's not our walking in the light that cleanses us from all sin, you hear me? The "if" there, he says, "if we walk in the light," the "if" there is not a condition for being cleansed. The "if" there is an evidence of one who has been cleansed. It's not our walking in the light that cleanses us. Do you know what it is that cleanses us? He says it right there. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. "What can wash away my sins?" Do you sing that song? "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow, no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus." Now if that's your song, if that's the song of your heart, that's an evidence that you are walking in the light and you've been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

All right, we'll conclude there and pick up there next week. Let's sing that hymn, "Are You Washed in the Blood?" Hymn number 208.