"Summer of Sin, the Apostle John" Jerry Arnold, July 29, 2006

…Lord, as we open Your word we pray that you would teach us, You would direct our thoughts; You will impress our hearts, our minds. Lord we ask that You will be powerful in our midst, mighty and strong, miraculous, that our hearts will be changed for being here. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

It had been a hard season for my brother; he was in the first grade. I am a little older than my brother, I am 13 months older than him; and I was in the third grade. It was spring, and a baseball season and I wanted to play baseball, and he wanted to play baseball, we had one bat and one ball. And what made it a hard season for him were several incidents that took place. This one is, we both saw the ball, we both saw the bat, I got there first, and here is how you play baseball with yourself. You throw the ball up, pull the bat back, and then you swing through it. Well dumb, which is me, ran there, grabbed the ball, threw it up, and threw the bat back which hit my brother across the forehead. Down he went, knocked out cold, blood all over his face, Mom and Dad took him to the hospital. He had to get stitches, had a big goose egg and I felt terrible. Yes, pretty much, I felt terrible.

Well, something inside of me stirred, I am a big brother, I am supposed to take care of him, so I began to have these noble concepts of taking care of my brother. I was watching him play t-ball once just a couple of weeks later. Now a t-ball, they have a little stand, it's got a rubber top on it, and the children stand there and swing until they hit the ball; and the hopes is, is that you can get them to run to the first base in stead of to the dugout or to the pitcher's mound or the third base, and you try to get them to learn the basics of the game. My brother was playing catcher. I have no idea why you have a catcher playing t-ball, but that's what his job was. And so this one kid got up there, and he just swung with all he was worth, and he hit the ball and he took of running; but before he took off, he threw the bat backwards, it was spinning and it hit my brother in the ankle. Now I was feeling sorry for my brother, and these noble gestures are rising within me that I need to protect him. And so just a few days later we had an incidence take place.

I'll tell you about it, but I need to give you just a little history. Up the street form us lived a fellow named Leonard Tally, he was my age. And Leonard and another kid had been picking on my brother Tom. Usually I wouldn't care, but it was a season of, you know, hard times for my brother Tom, so I wanted to protect him. And I said: "Tom, if Leonard gives you any trouble, tell me about it, and I'll help you." And I was walking home from school several blocks from my brother, and I could hear him, "Jerry, Jerry, help, help, Leonard is after me, Leonard is after me." So I turned around, and sure enough, Tom was running for all he was worth, and right behind him was Leonard, running for all he was worth. And as soon as they got near me, Tom just ran behind me, and I hit Leonard as hard as I could, and blooded his nose, and tears were coming out, and the poor kid, you know, he was a mess. And he started crying, and he said: "All I wanted to do is invite you to my birthday party."

Well, Leonard, lets get you cleaned up a little bit here body! And he talked about ice cream, and cake, and they were going to get a clown to come there, and then we were all going to go to the Mica Theaters, brand new theaters in Lavonia, Michigan, and we were going to watch Pinocchio or something, you know, brand new thing from Walt Disney. Oh, we were so excited, and so you know, we were walking with Leonard. Walked home with him all excited, and birthday was going to be that weekend, and you know, Leonard wasn't such a bad guy after all. Well my brother and I were sorely disappointed because my mother found out. There is something about mothers children, you just can't trust them. They find out. And my mother wouldn't let us go to the birthday party, and we just could get it. Why not, you know, we tried to explain everything to her, but it didn't matter. She wanted us to learn a lesson and the lesson is kind of like this: you can't smack somebody and expect to be friend with him.

I'd like to study that from the Bible with you today. Please turn in your Bibles to First John, chapter 1. We are continuing our series about sin. We've looked at what Moses had to say about it, what Solomon had to say about it, what Paul had to say about it, now we are looking at what John has to say about it. And we are looking at the letter he wrote in First John. We'll read the first 10 verses of this letter, it's actually the entirety of chapter one. John wrote this: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

A little background: John is in his mid eighties when he writes this. He writes this about the year 95. Sometime in the next year he'll be arrested and sent to the island of Patmos, and it's there that he'll have the Revelation of Jesus, and he'll write that. John is the last of the apostles; he is the last one alive, he is the grandfather of the movement, he is the living legend in his time, and he is writing a letter, a letter that will demonstrate a great tenderness but yet, forthrightness in his message. He is trying to call the Christian church back to some understandings. He begins in verse 1, he says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." John says, "Look, I heard Jesus, I saw Jesus, I looked upon Jesus, and I handled Jesus, and I want to share Him with you."

Back at this time there were some problems in the Christian church. Some ideas have begun to foster and to grow, we called them, heresies. And one of the ideas was that Jesus was really the child of Joseph and Mary. And that He was a human baby, but at His baptism the Spirit of The Christ came upon Him, and then at Calvary the Spirit of The Christ left Him. And so Jesus is not divine and human at the same time, He certainly was not associated with a miraculous birth. Well, that was one of the ideas that John was going to be addressing.

Another idea was that human flesh is what is sinful. It's not that flesh is referring to our sinful nature; it's just the fact that flesh it self is sinful, and the spiritual is holy. And so Jesus never did really come in incarnate, He was not God in the flesh because flesh is sinful. And there were some aberrant teachings that came off from that, one being and it's only logical, if the flesh is sinful, and yet when you are spiritual you are holy, then when you are spiritual it doesn't matter what your flesh does because it's not you anymore. And you can imagine what type of morality that would lead to. And we kind of chuckle at the foolishness of that, but I want you to know that in the 1800 that was within Adventism.

Now I am not talking about our denomination, but in 1844 when thousands were waiting for the Lord to return, the Miller rights as they were called by some, Adventists by others because they believed in the return of Christ, the advent of the Lord, when that didn't happen in 1844, that group of people splintered into a number of different groups. And much of it was fanaticism. One of the groups decided that well, you are supposed to be like children, and so they would actually crawl on their hands and knees to be demonstrating the humility of a child. And there other groups that went into spiritism and others that felt that, look, you reach a point where you are spiritual, but your flesh is sinful, so hay, just be in the spirit, and what your flesh does it's not you anymore. That happened in the 1800s. But that was not a part of our denomination, you must understand, that in 1844 with all that was going on, there would be 3 people who would gather together and study and hammer out the doctrines that we hold and then the church would be organized in 1861.

So there is kind of a time span when there is a lot of foolishness going on. Well, John is dealing with foolishness in his day. He does it in a very grandfatherly way. He is very kind, he is very engaging, but yet, he will be quiet to the point. He says in verses 2 and 3: "the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son n Jesus Christ." Four times in this chapter he will mention the word, "fellowship".

Now the word fellowship is a colorful word. Break it down into the two words that it is: fellow, and then, ship. A fellow is an individual that you are associated with, a partner if you will. You can be a fellow in a law firm; you can be a fellow of a group going through school together, we can be fellows in a family way, it's someone you are in a partnership with. And the word, ship it's definitely a ship. It goes somewhere. Fellowship is

identifying two people or more that are together going somewhere. And John identifies two aspects of that fellowship. The aspect of humanity fellowshipping together with us he says, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son." So when we talk about John and sin, in this chapter, he places it in the context of going somewhere together either with each other or with God. And that is the key in helping us understand what John has to say about sin.

When you come to verse 4 it says: "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Some of your Bibles say "that our joy may be full". It doesn't matter, I mean if I share with you and you accept Christ, my joy will be full, and so will yours, right? Our works, your works, it doesn't matter, where Christ is there is joy. Verse 5: "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." This concept of light is quite familiar to us as Christians. You have the idea at creation, where God calls the light into being. You have the idea at salvation where I once was in darkness but now I am in the light. We even have the idea in Hank Williams' song as he is headed towards Montgomery, "I saw the light." No more, what is it? How many of you know words to that? Okay, now I know who listens to Hank Williams.

Well, in this verse, we kind of just read it and say, well yes, light, darkness, I get it. Light is more powerful than darkness and you know all that, but that is not what is talking about. It's not a metaphor to teach us about the power of light over darkness; it is helping us to understand the morality of God. That God is holy, righteous, He has tremendous ethics, He is good, He is truth filled. And that is in contrast to darkness. And darkness is unholy ness, unrighteousness, evil, and things that are false, deceptive. And so, if we say that we have a morality, a fellowship with God, and we are walking in a morality with God, and yet, at the same time, we are walking in a morality that is evil, we lie, and do not practice the truth.

Now this is the picture of somebody maybe you, come to church, you hear about the truth, and you get excited about it, but yet, the heart is not given over to the Lord, and there is a walking in evil. Hold your hand here and turn to Luke chapter 11, Jesus will talk about the concept of light and walking with God. In Luke 11 verse 34 Jesus says that: "The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when you eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness." He is in essence saying, where you are looking, determines what is happening inside. If you are looking towards the light, you'll have the light inside, if you are looking towards the dark, you'll have the darkness inside.

Verse 35 He says: "Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness." How could the light that is in us be darkness? Well, I'll share with you from the story I opened up with. Let's say, that God were to say to me when I was in the third grade, "Jerry, are you your brother's keeper?" What would I have said? Oh yes, I am doing a good job. I have protected him from Leonard, and I am going to protect him from other people. Let me ask you something? Do you think hitting Leonard in the nose was God's prescribed method for dealing with this situation? Absolutely not, my light was darkness.

And so it is in our lives, we can so easily justify something that we do, especially in the context of fellowship relating to other people. I would tell you brothers and sisters, that almost every church conflict that ever takes place, is somebody thinking they have light, when it's really darkness. Because, in the Spirit of God I will deal with things like I am in the Spirit of God. And the ugliness and the evil that takes place over such righteous things as to how to do this, and how to do that, when you think about it, it is light that is really darkness, and it creates terrible heartache, and it destroys fellowship and it is not of the Lord. So it becomes imperative that we learn to keep our eyes on Christ because this text is telling us that the truth that we've heard that by beholding we are changed, that is true. You behold Jesus, you become like Jesus. You behold your problems or the problem people, you become like them, or like your problems, that's the principle of the scriptures.

Now let's go back to First John; walking in the light, walking in the morality of Christ because of looking at Christ. In verse 7 it says: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Now, what sin? What sin is being spoken up here? When we looked at what Moses had to say about sin, we learned that the mother of all sin is unbelief. When we looked at what Solomon had to say about sin, we learned about the wise and the foolish life, how they are contrasted. When we looked at what the Apostle Paul had to say about sin, we realize we are sinful to the core. We are sin. I mean, it's just horrible what the capacities are that we have.

Now we are looking at John. This is many years after Paul has died. John, if you will, has the last word on sin. What is he talking about? He even says in verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Well, what sin is he talking about? Is it this, "God I am rotten, I am evil, and I am bad, please forgive me." Would God listen to a prayer like that? I hope so, I prayed a lot. I believe you'd get action in heaven from a prayer like that. I really do. But that, brothers and sisters is not the sin John is writing about. We find that out by looking at verse 9. He says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Now confessing sins is to talk to God honestly, humbly; this is in the context of a fellowship. It is communication where we are identifying specific sins before God. Let me share with you how it works, again in the context of fellowship, of relationship. A husband walks into the house, and there is something he hasn't done, or something he has done, and there is conflict between them, and stuff like this; and so he says to his wife: "you know, it's just me, I am a bad person, can't you forgive me?" Now wives, does that really cut it for you? Not going to work, is it? Is it true, "I am just a bad person, it's just me." Is that true, oh yes, however, you know, just a few moments ago when I asked you if I tell God, I am just a bad person, it's just me, I mean I am this way to the core, would You forgive me, you know we all agreed, well yes, He will. But yet John is talking about fellowshipping with God. And apparently there is a dept of relationship that he wants us to experience that comes beyond the idea of just you know, accepting Christ as our Savior.

And when you look at it in the idea of a relationship like marriage, you begin to see how it works. I can not go home and have my wife angry with me for something I did or didn't do and just say, "Oh Karen, it's just me, just forgive me, you know how I am, ha, ha." Yes, she won't accept that.

Let me give you another scenario. And again, I'll choose my self, it's a familiar turf. Let's say I walk into the house. "Karen, I have done something very bad, please forgive me." Well, what is she going to say? Yes, you know her, don't you? "What did you do?" "No, no, it doesn't matter Karen, I've done something very bad, just forgive me." She will not rest until she finds out what it is. There will be tension in the home until I tell her what it is. And I better not make up something, she'll find out what the truth is, right?

Now, think of that in the context of a relationship with God, fellowshipping with God. "Lord today, I was bad, please forgive me and help me to rest tonight." Now what is that saying to God? Yes, you know, I am not interested in engaging with You. But John is saying if we confess our sins, specific sins! "I have been this way, I was bad this way, I did this, I didn't do that, God will You forgive me?" Now this is extremely important in the context of growing spiritually because it's possible that our darkness can seem like a light. But if we are going to have fellowship with God, and fellowship with one another, we have to understand, that confession of sin is not just this white brush thing, but it is specific. If you are a liar, tell God you are liar. If you are stealing, tell God you are stealing. If you are ungrateful, tell God you are ungrateful. If you are inpatient and unkind, tell God you inpatient and unkind. If you haven't been treating your spouse right, tell God that, you'll get right with Him, and by His grace you'll start to become right with men. But if we are just mean, and we duck and run, it's not going to work.

I'll tell you another example. A man, if he is unkind and critical, and overbearing to his wife, finds fault in all that she has done that day, and he is just grinding her down, and grinding her down, and then, it's time to go to bed, she comes walking out of the bathroom, huh, looks pretty good. He says, "Hay Baby" and she'll hay babying him back, you know, "babyish, maybe" nothing is happening that night. Why? Fellowship, relationship, a man can not treat his wife so rudely, and then expect marital privileges, and the same it's true about a woman with her husband. Now that's a relationship, marriage that is supposed to demonstrate the relationship we have with God. So if I am just kind of flipping God of through the day, "Yes, yes, I know what You want me to do, but I got to do this, I got to do that, I got this problem, I got that problem to deal with, yes, yes, don't bother me, I got to live life God" and then it comes to the end of the night, and then I say, "God, I would like peace in my heart, I would like to go to bed with joy, and to sleep like the righteous." It's not going to work! He is going to say, "Don't hey Baby me, we got to talk."

And so sin, for John, in the context of fellowship, is specific. He says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins…" again, specific sins, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The cleansing from God is a cleansing that we can liken to living here in Tennessee. This time of the year, it's kind of hot. I don't know if you noticed that? All you need to do is open the door, and you need to go back and take the

shower almost, it's just hot and it's humid, and for us, Yankees that won't leave, you know, all we can do is whine about it, but we are not going anywhere we like it better than the snow. But it's a time when it's hot.

Now, I want to ask you a question. In the last 7 days, how many of you took at least 5 baths, or showers, yeah either one, you bathed, you got cleaned up. 5 out of 7 days, and most of you probably did 7 out 7 days, right? I mean, aren't you with me? You know, at the end of one of these summer days, don't you just look forward to that shower? And get all the salty crate off you, and then you get cleaned up and you are ready for bed. Doesn't that feel good?

This is the cleansing that Jesus wants to give us spiritually. It's not something you do one time; it's something you do continually. You get cleansed by Him, and you are sat right, and He says, it happens when we confess our sins. When we get specific, He can really clean when we get specific. It's like going to the dentist. If you have a tooth that hurts, you don't want him to work on a good tooth. Even though it's more painful for him to work on the one that hurts, you got to deal with where the pain is, and what's causing the problem, and he fixes you. And sin hurts, it hurts us, we are ashamed of it. We don't like to be honest to God about it. But that's where victory is born in the experience. That's what John is saying. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and the Word is not in us."

When I was a little boy, we would go to my Grandma's and Grandpa's cottage on the Mighty Muskegon River, oh man, I just loved it! My aunts, and uncles, and cousins would be there, and cousin's dogs, and extended family, and up there in Northern Michigan, we just loved it, I had a ball, I enjoyed every minute of it except when I was little, I hated the nights. The evening! My mother, she would take this basin, this metal basin, and there was not hot water in the cottage, I mean we were out in the woods, but she would heat water up on the stove and poured in this basin. And she would bathe my brother and me. And I can remember being 3 and 4 years old, and her washing me. Now, she washed me before, I didn't mind that. But bear naked in the middle of the cottage with all my girl cousins running around and aunts, and uncles, I am telling you, I found it so intrusive. I did not like it at all. And I just couldn't wait for the day when I was big enough that I could take a bar of Ivory soap which floats in the water, and just wash in the river, by my self. But even though I didn't like the bath because of all that was taking place, I did feel good afterward.

Brothers and sisters I am going to ask you to take a bath today. But I am not going to ask you to do it publicly like I had to do when I was little. I am going to ask you to do it privately, between you and the Lord. And our appeal today is going to be just a little different than we normally have. Usually I ask you to recommit your life to Christ or to accept Him. But today, I am going to ask you to listen to a prayer I am going to pray, and then during the time of silence I am going to ask you to pray that Jesus will wash you and make you clean, and that you will be specific with Him about what sin in your life you know you need to deal with. Let's bow our heads.

Father in Heaven, I ask now for Your Holy Spirit to brood over us. I pray Heavenly Father that You would speak to us about the specific sin that is hurting our fellowship with You, and fellowship with other people. Please speak to us at this time.

Thank You Lord for Your cleansing; we thank you in Jesus' name, Amen.