

**1 John 1: 1 and 2; “Christ the Tangible”, Sermon # 1 in a series entitled -
"Behold What Manner of Love", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on November 1st, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Everything which is related to this life and creation and people has a beginning. The only one who does not have a beginning is God. He has no beginning, He has no ending, He just always was, and is, and always will be. He is self-existent. "From eternity to eternity He is God." But what is truly wonderful is what it says here; "That which was from the beginning". What beginning is the Apostle talking about? Is it the beginning of God's purposes in eternity past, or is it the beginning of Jesus' coming into this fallen world of sin? Or is it some other beginning which we will have to try to discover? Well, Jesus Christ, when He came into the world is here called by John- "The Word of Life." Here, in these words of the first few verses of this little book of 1st John, we find described for us, a beginning made, of the manifestation of eternal life in the dimension of time and space. It makes me think of John 1: 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "He was in the beginning with God." "All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Now how great and glorious is that? The Word, the Logos which was with God from the beginning of the creation of the World, being spoken as a Word of Life to all the World of fallen mankind. He was with God before the beginning of the World, in eternity past. He was begotten of God long before the World began; and He was distinguished in the Godhead to be God the Son, before ever the World was. But this same eternal Word was also later spoken, and our Lord Jesus was brought forth, in the incarnation; brought forth from the Virgin Mary's womb, to be the beginning of the that eternal life; that righteous life; that immortal life; that most wonderful of lives; which life which was be the light of men. He was brought forth and wrapped up in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, so that men; sinful men; could gaze upon Him, touch Him, and handle Him. The Word was spoken by God the Father in such a way that sinful men can only ignore it to their own detriment. God will accomplish His great and holy purposes. "A word is that by which we convey our thoughts, it is that by which we communicate our will." "It is that by which we communicate with others," says Albert Barnes. The 2nd person of the Trinity is the Essential Word of God. He is the One who is the very expression of God Himself. He is the wisdom of God, He is the Righteousness of God, He is the power of God. God the Father expresses everything of Himself through His only begotten Son.

But this 1st verse in 1st John is not speaking of the pre-incarnate Son of God, or the incarnation of the Son of God, only. It is speaking of things in these verses that are tangible. He is speaking of the real and tangible fellowship that every believer might have with the Father and the Son. He is speaking of the tangible joy that we might have coming to our hearts when we believe in this testimony of the Apostle John. The tangible is that which can be touched, known, and

experienced. And we can know, as we look at this text, that there are 2 things tangible about the Word of Life, Jesus Christ, which every believer should hold fast to, in his mind and heart, so that their heart is strengthened to continue to believe and do the will of God. 1st, every believer ought to hold fast the truth that John has declared to us; that Jesus Christ the Word, is indeed, tangible flesh and blood humanity. Then 2ndly - Every believer ought to hold fast the truth that Jesus Christ is the Only tangible manifestation of that eternal life which was with the Father. Actually we will see that there are many more spiritual things which are tangible to the life and experience of the believer which are mentioned here in the verses that follow these two; but for now, we will content ourselves with these two. **1st- Every believer ought to hold fast the truth that John has declared to us; that Jesus Christ the Word is indeed, tangible flesh and blood humanity.**

That which was from the beginning, here, actually includes not only the Beginning; Christ's being begotten in eternity past; or being begotten in the incarnation, but also includes the beginning of Christ's public ministry. These Apostles did not hear, see, look upon, and handle Christ from Eternity Past or from the Beginning of time, or even from the beginning of Christ's earthly life. It was rather that they experienced what He was really like, during that three and a half year's period of time in which they walked with Him. These Apostles of our Lord were called to follow him and be near to Him, and to understand by being with Him, that He was an altogether unique and different sort of man. He was a man who was being seen by them and perceived by them as Divine; but nevertheless, they also perceived Him to be very much a man like themselves, in some very important ways. He had great and amazing strengths; He had a perceptive and intelligent mind, coupled with great humility. He was a man who could minister all day, and sometimes pray all night, and yet He could sleep in the midst of a storm. He could then awaken from that sleep and calm the storm with a word. He was a man who had all the power and wisdom of a Divine nature and yet He also had all of limitations of human nature. I believe that it was something that His disciples thought about often. They came gradually to understand Jesus as God's Word, the Word of Life; that He fully represented the Father in His deity, and that He fully represented them, in a sinless way, in His humanity. Let's look more closely for a moment at how one of them describes their Master. John says, "That which we have heard." The Apostles had heard a great deal, and they had agonized over the truth of what Christ was like, for themselves.

Turn with me to John 6: 56-68. Here we find that the Apostles had been given grace to recognize that the words that Jesus spoke were not just ordinary words. They were spiritual, life giving words to those who believed. He says in verse 63, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." "But there are some of you who do not believe." "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him." Jesus was saying that there was eternal life in those words which He spoke to them; if they would only couple their

hearing with faith. But His words came from a real mouth, a human nature and body. This man was tangible. He was made of real human substance with a real human nature. Some of them reasoned to themselves, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"(Verse 52) The Divine nature of Jesus was subsisting right along side, and inside of, those words. Many of those who at first thought of themselves and called themselves his disciples did not truly believe. And so He says in verse 65, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." And then comes this amazing statement, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more."

Now, we need to understand that this kind of thing also happens in our own day. There are many, many people who would call themselves Christians and believe that they have eternal life; who will nevertheless not receive the words of Jesus in his "difficult sayings". Jesus had been speaking to his disciples here in this passage in John 6, about how He was the bread of life. You can see the end of that discourse if you glance back up to verse 57. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." "This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead." "He who eats this bread will live forever." "These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum." "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can understand it?'" You see, this saying caused them to stop following Him because they didn't understand that He was speaking to them about spiritual realities; not literal physical realities.

You must ask yourself, "Do I understand spiritual realities, so that I am really a partaker of Christ?" Or do I simply go to Church and take the sacraments, and think that I am saved because I act religious? There is a real difference Jesus is saying. And so it was then, that after so many of these "disciples" left Jesus, He turned to the twelve and asked them, "Do you also want to go away?" "But Simon Peter answered him and said, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?'" "You have the words of eternal life." Jesus had with Him these words. The Apostles heard them for themselves and they were willing to receive them, and meditate upon them, and abide them. These are the words of the Scriptures that we have before us tonight. This is what makes Christ tangible to our faith. This is how we know that we will not leave Christ and stop following Him. It is because we know that even if the sayings are difficult, that it is imperative to the life of our souls that we receive them and rest upon them, and feed upon Christ through them. That is what we must do to have the assurance of eternal life; the eternal life to which we have been drawn to, by the Father. Even if the saying is difficult, it is for us to profit from it, and by it. And we will; by faith.

Then it also says in John 1: 1, that they had seen Him with their eyes. Matthew 14: 26 says that one night that the disciples were in a boat on the sea. And Jesus came to them walking on the sea. And it says, "they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost! And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying,

‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ They thought of him as a ghost. But he assured them that he was no phantom or phaeton. He is not simply a ghostly spirit to be seen. He was a man of flesh and blood like themselves, only divine. They received Him into the boat with them, it says in that place. Do you think of the Lord Jesus in this way? Sometimes when you have providential things happen in your life, and you know that you believe in the sovereignty of God, you can actually become afraid of what the Lord Jesus is doing when He is coming to you "walking on the water" in this way. He is coming to reveal Himself to you in a greater way; His glory and power; His ability to be with you and for you in the most difficult situations of your life. He is able to say to you in the most uncertain of times, "Be of good cheer!" He is able to say unto your soul, "It is I." You can even ask Him, like Peter did, if you might come out and walk on the water with Him. That is; that you might have Him help you to do things which you now think are really beyond your ability to do, but with His help might become real. I am thinking about your learning to walk in the Spirit and doing the kind of good works that Christ did to help other people. You may have never engaged in good works like this before, but now by the strength of Christ, you can begin to minister to others. The things impossible with man, are possible with God!

It also says that their hands handled Him. This seems to a direct reference to Luke 24: 36-43. Here we find the resurrected Christ saying to them, "Peace to you." "But they were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit." "And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.'" Jesus, the Word of Life is indeed tangible flesh and blood. Someday, if you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall have the privilege to be able to touch the Lord Jesus and know that this Divine Person really did give His life for you. Someday seems far away now, but it is nearer than you think. You can touch Him spiritually now and find grace and mercy and peace and blessing, each and every day. Will you not seek Him now, in order to find Him near in every hour?

2ndly - Every believer ought to hold fast the truth that Jesus Christ is the Only tangible manifestation of that eternal life which was with the Father.

Verse 2 says, "And 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---." There was only one life given by God to forever change the lives of millions and billions of people. This was God's Master Plan. Eternal life would be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it would never be found in any other person. He always existed from eternity past in the Father, but was made manifest in the fullness of time. No other person would be given to manifest the life of God to men. Turn over with me to 1 John Chapter 3 and verse 5. "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." Our first forefather Adam sinned in the beginning and in him all became sinners and all

would experience death. But in the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested the One and the only One who could undo all the damage that the first person had done, and would bring with Him infinite and eternal blessings besides. These words tell us two very important things. They tell us that the Lord Jesus, as the Son of God, existed before He was manifested. And they tell us the purpose of His being manifested; to take away our sins. The life was "manifested" refers to the Father sending forth His Son, to be born in His incarnation, and that it was His great purpose that all of the gift of eternal life would be connected with His person. He would be sent to manifest the righteousness and glory of God. He would be manifested to take away our sins. This truth is seen and understood in the phrase which is written of Him that He is "the Only-Begotten of the Father. You can see this truth is a favorite with John the Apostle, if you will turn with me to John Chapter 1, verse 14. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And also verse 18 of Chapter 1. "No one has seen God at any time." "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." We see here that in the sending and giving His "Only-Begotten Son", God was as it were, taking out His heart out of His own bosom and showing it to us and saying, "See, here is what I am like." "Here is the One person in all the World who can fully represent My heart of compassion to sinful men." "For God so loved the World that He gave His only-begotten Son...." And John 3: 18, which says, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." God has deliberately made the gospel simple in this regard; that we need look no further than the One sinless Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to find salvation and eternal life. Oh, how the nations of the world have complicated things by making up religions which are false and then expecting other people to accept them! God's way to eternal life is one, and the Person who will bring you there is one.

Let me ask you this afternoon; how precious is this truth to you? This truth is very precious to one who is seeking to be saved from their sins. It is very precious to the one who has found forgiveness for their sins, and the meaning of life. It is very precious to the one who has found God and Christ to be living and true. All of life has meaning. If they hear someone else speaking about the philosophies of the Gautama Buddha, if they see someone forcefully insisting on the supposed truth of the Koran or the Bhagavad-Gita; which tell of some other supposedly divine persons or prophet-saviors; it pains their heart indeed. And they yearn to say a word to them about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is indeed, God's Only-Begotten. You see; these other gods are not true and living, and they can only deceive the one who is trying to find salvation from their sins and eternal life. Only Jesus Christ has been sent into the world by God the Father to die for sins, and only Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. This is where the proof of our religion is found. If you come to Christ, you find the free gift of eternal life. You find

cleansing for all your sins. "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6: 23) If you have come to know the preciousness of Christ for yourself, then will you not pray to share Him with others? I love how the Apostle Paul breaks out in benedictions of joy and delight when he thinks of all that Christ has done for him. In 1st Timothy 1: 15 he says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life." "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the Only Wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever." "Amen"