

Opening – When I was a kid I used to go on quite a few Christian camps. I can remember hearing talks where the gospel was presented and I was told I was a sinner and I needed to repent. I think I must have prayed the prayer and repented 3 or 4 times just to make sure that I was saved. Today as we look at 1 John that question of how do I know that I am saved? How do I know that I am God's child? This question arises again. Three or four weeks ago I started reading through 1 John beginning to get a feel for what John was writing and the key ideas. So I read things like in ch.3:4-8. Have a look with me:

⁴ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, **sin is lawlessness.** ⁵ But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶ **No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.** No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ **The one who does what is sinful is of the devil,** because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

So I'm thinking well I still sin. What does this say about me? What am I to make of these verses? And there are others like them in 1 John. So can I be a follower of Jesus, part of God's family, in the kingdom, if I keep on sinning. John says quite clearly here that I belong to the Devil if I sin. Wow!! The preacher man belongs to the Devil. What's going on here. I must admit I did think at one stage, Why am I doing this letter of John? Let's go back to the easy book of Matthew. So it's been an interesting journey over the last 3 weeks and especially this week. But I've been reminded of truths that I must cling to as God's child. I'm still seeking to grasp these truths but hopefully we can be reminded today of some important foundational truths of what it means to follow Christ.

PRAY –

John is writing to a church or a group of churches, we're not told specifically. In these churches there would be a mixture of Christians and seekers, people who were not followers of Jesus yet. And there were people presenting some wrong views about who Jesus was. There were some issues that needed to be addressed and we'll come across those as we move through the letter in the next few weeks.

Ok let's start with the easy bit. v.1-4 is a great opening by John. As we read it we're reminded of the beginning of John's gospel.

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 4 In him was life, and that life was **the light** of all mankind. 5 **The light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.....9 The **true light** that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.....14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his **glory**, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John is saying at the very beginning here, I was one of the guys who saw him, we heard him speak, perform miracles, raise the dead, we watched him be crucified and then we saw him after he rose from the dead and then we saw him ascended. You want to know the truth about Jesus. I was there with him. I know the truth about him. This will be important later in the letter as he challenges the people who are saying false things about Jesus; and I'm not talking about people outside of the church, these were people who were inside the church. v.3 and 4 are great aren't they – we want you to have the same fellowship with us and with the Father and the Son. And so as we share the truths about Jesus and the fellowship that you can enjoy with him our joy will be made complete. We are not created just to have a knowledge ABOUT God; or to perform some set of rituals; we are made to have fellowship, to have deep friendship with God and with each other. It's an intimate relationship. Marriage is supposed to be a good picture of this but any friendship where there is deep intimacy and desire for sharing life, hopes and dreams is a picture, a pale picture, of the relationship or fellowship that God desires with us and that John writes about here.

Ok. Let's move to part 2. v.5 to v.2 of chapter 2. As we read this we need to remember that as we see in other parts of the Bible Jewish writers had this acrostic sort of style. Often there would be a repetitive style of writing. And a toing and froing. As we read through this now keep in mind that there were a group of people in this church or group of churches who firstly, believed some false things about the person of Jesus and his divinity but secondly, these same people or maybe others had some false ideas about sin.

So let's read this:

*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 out 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^[b] 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 is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, **we have an advocate with the Father**—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the **atoning sacrifice for our sins**, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Two important things out of this. Sin is a state of rebellion against God. Those who are walking in the light, are those who have confessed their rebellion against God. Those who say that I do not need to repent, I'm not a rebel, I'm not a sinner are those who walk in darkness. The second key thing is that When we confess our sin and repent and come into relationship with God John says that we are purified, and all our sins are forgiven, past, present and future – he purifies us from all our sin. So in God's thinking I am no longer counted as a sinner. I have been set free. And these two truths are critical to keep in mind as we go through this whole letter.

So just to emphasise this again. **In 1 John you've got a situation, there's dissension in the church, there are people who aren't loving one another, there are people who are anti-**

Christ, there are people who are trying to lead some of the people away from Christ and those people who are trying to do that are members of the congregation. They're not outsiders. And the people who are trying to lead them away are trying to say to the believers that your faith isn't valid, and that you have no justification for the things you are saying. And John wants to say to them, "Oh hang on a minute, they do have some justification for what their believing, cause I've told them and I was there. So I can assure you that what I am telling you is the truth and what I am telling you is that Christ has come to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin, our rebellion, to purify us from all sin. So as we read 1 John against the backdrop of the beginning of John's gospel, what do we read. The light has come into the world, and the world didn't recognise him and tried to overthrow him. So he's come in, and he's brought light, and John's saying that light will save you, it will cleanse you permanently, because once you've confessed your sins, in v.9 of 1 John, the results of that are permanent and ongoing. The Greek word for "confess" is in the aorist tense – don't worry I didn't know what it meant either but it's really important. It means a single action that takes place, it's normally past tense – so "I kicked the ball" is aorist tense. Now the Greek word for purify or cleanse depending on what version you have is in the perfect tense. Sorry this is sounding like an English lesson but hang in there with me. So a sentence like "I am kicking the ball" is perfect tense, the action is ongoing, continuous tense. So John is saying you confessed you sin once and the results of that are permanent ongoing, you have been cleansed, or rather, the cleansing continues. You're not just purified from sin up to a certain point, it's ongoing. So you don't need to confess again and again because you've already done it. Some people say well you can't say that and John says Yes I can and I would like you all to be in this state of forgiveness, so don't keep in this state of rebellion, don't be people who are anti-Christ.

Let me just reinforce this point by looking at Romans 6 just briefly. Paul has been arguing that Jesus' death brings new life to those who believe. And so in Romans 6:1 – Paul says "shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Paul says No!! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer. What he means is this: Will we be allowed to continue in sin, to which the answer is No, God's not going to allow us to stay in sin. So he goes on in v.11, so now you consider

yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. And then he finishes by saying the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life. He's not saying it's now up to you to not sin; what God has done now is he's delivered you from sin and your debt to sin which is why in chap 7 of Romans he goes on to make that big discussion of husbands and wives and adultery; how your wife is set free when the husband dies etc; likewise you've been set free so you're not bound to that anymore; so it's not a description of something we go on to do, because his whole argument in Romans has been how it's God's work; so once he goes into ch.6 he's saying well God is not going to let you continue in that state of sin; he's delivered you from that state of sin; you're not in that state of sin, you're dead to that state of sin, just as if you're a married person and the partner had died, so the obligations that counted under marriage don't apply anymore. You're now free; and if you were still under sin you would die. And so he goes on in ch.8 so who's going to bring any charge against you because God's declared us free and innocent etc.

Coming back to John His audience is a mixed lot. He wants to cover his bases. He doesn't want to say to non believers , "you're ok". But he wants to say to them, "Just remember, you're not in a good position." This is a call to conversion – to put sin behind them, to not give sin a place in your life. John's saying to these non-believers don't walk in darkness; don't claim that you have not sinned , that you have not been in rebellion against God. And at that point these people are making a decision about whether they are going to embrace sin or not.

But you will say to me. Dave I still do things that are not good. I get angry with my wife; I am selfish and just think of what's good for me. And I know what you're thinking. I have been thinking about this over this week. God is a holy God and he doesn't look favourably on my anger, my jealousy etc etc etc. Ok So what is God going to do about it? Is he sitting up in heaven with a big book open noting down my "sins". No! Romans 8:1 – There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

When I do something that displeases God I can thank him that I have been forgiven. I don't have to confess again – if I do that I'm denying what Jesus has already done for me. If I confess, there is Jesus looking at the book – why are you confessing to me Dave. Let's look at the book. There's no mark against my name. It's not even recorded with a line through it. When I thank Jesus for his forgiveness this is a spur to me to desire his righteousness more. So often my attitude is to beat up on myself. I've failed again. But that is denying the position that I have in Christ. I am a saved sinner; in God's books there is not one blot, right now, yes, just after I have been rude to George or failed to help that person that I know needed help. I no longer live under the condemnation of the law. Paul says again and again I have been set free from the law of sin and death. The law was to bring me to a realisation of my sin; and when I have repented I am no longer under the condemnation of the law.

How are you going with all this? I think I'll stop there. I'm still trying to work it out. But let's work through it together. We've got three more weeks.

But if you take nothing else away from today, remember, 1. Sin is a state of rebellion against God. John is saying don't stay in this state. Confess your sin, come into the light.

2. When we confess our sin and repent and come into relationship with God John says that we are purified, and all our sins are forgiven, past, present and future – he purifies us from all our sin. So in God's thinking I am no longer counted as a sinner. I have been set free. And nothing we do can take us out of being in God's family. As God's child you are no longer judged by the Law. Yes, you'll fail. But if there's one thing that we can be confident about is, once you're saved, you're saved. Once you're in Christ's hands he's not going to let go of you.

If you are concerned about something I said please talk to me about it or maybe you want to clarify where you are with God. Don't leave it. John's letter is a warning to you if you haven't confessed your sins.

PRAYER: Father God we thank you that you love us, and we thank you for all of the good things that you've done for us and we pray that we might rejoice in those things as you intended for us to do. Help us to be able to rejoice in the fact that we're now white as snow. Help us to rejoice in the fact that we're now light. Help us to rejoice in the fact that we're now seated with our brother in the heavenlies. Help us to rejoice in knowing that we're your children and help us to rejoice in knowing that one day we're going to be with you at that great bridal feast with you. And we're looking forward to that.