

1 John - False Teachers

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1 John - False Teachers

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

I often find myself marveling at God's leading. When I set out to share a series of messages from 1st John – it was because I was sure that was God's leading. And I am willing to confess to you – having studied 1st John in the past – I mumbled something to the Lord – about there really didn't seem to be all that much in 1st John that would be relevant to the people today. But, Lord, if that is what you want me to do I am determined to be obedient.

During the time of studying and preparing these lessons was one of those times when I marvel at God's timing. Several things came about during this series - things that I did not see coming - things that now they have taken place – I say “wow God – you knew this was coming when you told me to go down this road”!

Today, this letter we call 1st John could not be more relevant for us to hear. So, let's take a look at this next section of 1st John. In this portion of 1st John, the Holy Spirit addresses “children, fathers, and young men.”

While the words are of the male gender – as would be appropriate in the culture of that day – the message is appropriate for both male and female in the culture of our day. The words spoken to “fathers” will apply equally well to spiritually mature men and spiritually mature women. The words spoken to “young men” will apply equally well to young men and young women who are more mature than children, but less mature than “fathers.” This isn't about making a distinction regarding chronological age – but is very much about spiritual maturity.

Read 1 John 2:12 and make notes:

To everyone who has come to accept Jesus as their Savior and are still children spiritually – regarding the sins we have committed – God forgave us - so that we could know him. Children don't know or understand a great deal about life. Spiritual children don't know very much of the Bible –and they may not understand many of the truths found in the Bible. But it is important for the children to know – and to remember – that God has forgiven our sins. And it is not because we did the right amount of something to earn our forgiveness – but God forgave us on account of His Name!

God forgave us because of Christ. Jesus is the reason why God forgave our sins. It was because of who the Lord Jesus is. God forgives because of what the Lord Jesus has done. He died for our sins. He rose up from the dead to save us. Jesus has rescued us from sin.

Read 1 John 2:13 and make notes:

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

Surely all Christians “know” God – all Christians have called on His name - all Christians believe God raised Jesus from the dead. But those who are called “fathers” - they have “known” the one who is from the beginning – they have a deeper relationship than those who are called “children.” And they have a deeper relationship than those called “young men.”

Those called “young men” don’t have the spiritual maturity of those called “fathers” - but they do have the spiritual strength to refuse the lure of the false teachers. And they have shown themselves to have the spiritual strength to overcome the devil.

Those called “young men” don’t understand a lot of the deep spiritual truths. They probably don’t have deep theological roots – but they do know what they believe. And they know that they can depend on the power of God. So they are able to defeat the devil when he tries to make them sin.

Read 1 John 2:14 and make notes:

This verse sounds so much like the one before it – But it is saying things just a little differently. Here the “young men” are acknowledged as being “strong” and it is acknowledged that the Word of God “lives in them.” Do you remember in a previous lesson – we saw in the text from 1st John - that some of the false teachers were saying - “hey, we have the Word of God living in us.” And the Holy Spirit said through John – “no you don’t” – “that’s a lie”?

If we don’t walk in the Light and we don’t follow after the example that Jesus set forth - Then we don’t have the Word of God living in us. Here these believers who admit that they are not yet spiritually mature are being confirmed. They are told that “the Word of God lives in you.”

This is a powerful difference between the Young Men in the Lord and the false teachers! The children have met Jesus. The young men are stronger spiritually than the children – but they need to grow in spiritual maturity. Even though they have room to grow and mature – the young men do have a real relationship with God. The young men are strong enough to fight spiritual battles for themselves and to help protect the children. And they are strong BECAUSE the Word of God is in them.

Read 1 John 2:15 and make notes:

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

This instruction is to all those mentioned already. This is for the Fathers – the Young Men – and the Children - Don't love the World! This isn't talking about the earth itself – God made the earth and He said it was good. This isn't talking about the people in the world – God loves everyone of them – and desires for all of them to spend eternity with Him.

The term “world” as used here means everything that opposes God and His kingdom. It is referring to everything that Satan controls – everything Satan has perverted.

Christians are IN the world – but we are not OF the world. The Christian desires to please the Father – and that means we do not desire those things that oppose God or His will or His purpose.

To love the world – or the things of the world speaks of selfish desires. To love the world – is to place a higher value on things that on a relationship with God. To love the world – is to envision our security as coming from something in or of the world. To love the world – is to take pleasure in the outward senses - whether they be taste, smell, sight, or touch.

Maybe its the pleasure of the imagination – to which the eye finds itself so quickly volunteering to be a servant. Or maybe it is that internal sense by which we relish whatever seems grand to us - or to that which seems new or beautiful.

Read 1 John 2:16 and make notes:

Since everything of the world does not come from God - then to love the things of the world is love that which works against God. There are desires that come from the flesh - and the flesh is a part of the world. There are desires that come from wanting more of the world – and that is wanting more that opposes God. There is the desire of the eyes – as we see more – we want more. Now why is this relevant today?

First –

Because of all the things that are being taught to people today. It is very important for God's people to know – and to remember – that the reason we have our sins forgiven – is not because of the type of repenting actions - is not because of the number of times we did a certain thing - But simply because God accepted the repentance of our heart. And He forgave us on account of His Name and on account of What Jesus Did on our behalf.

We cannot take any credit for being forgiven of our sins. And we endanger ourselves and others when we do take credit for having our sins forgiven.

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

Secondly -

It is the natural tendency to apply this text to wanting gold, silver, cars, houses, finances, and the like. But it also applies to Church People wanting more of what they see that some other Church has.

As a congregation or as a group – instead of desiring to have – and willing to accept - whatever the Holy Spirit should decide to give us - we desire to have specifically what some other church has but maybe more of it.

As an individual Christian – we desire to have specifically what some other Christian appears to have – or maybe only claims to have. This is a worldly desire.

The difference I am about to share with you can appear to be slight or subtle with a fast look. But if you slow down and consider it – the difference is very significant.

There is a major and important difference between saying “Lord I want whatever you want me to have – and I am willing to accept whatever you choose to give me” - And saying “I want that specific thing – that gift – that anointing – but I don’t want that one or that one.”

This is where we begin to see a difference in the “children” – the “young men” – and the “fathers.” The children are so easily attracted to flashing lights – interesting sounds – and the promise of exciting experiences. These things may in fact get the attention of the young men but they will begin to question the validity and will resist just jumping onto the cart. The fathers are not attracted to the flashing lights or the bells and whistles. The fathers are only desiring of the authentic relationship with Jesus.

This is where we can see great relevance for the church today. A number of churches have been praying for revival. A number of ministers and church leaders have been asking God to pour out revival on our community. Satan does not allow request like this to go un-challenged. Satan certainly does not want God’s people to receive revival.

Those who are “children” spiritually – they run after flashing lights – interesting sounds – promises of excitement. They literally chase after that which is counterfeit. And when real revival does come – they will probably miss it – because they have become so caught up in the counterfeit.

Those who are “young men” in the spirit – are not only strong and able to fight – they are willing to fight. And while it is God’s purpose that the Young Men be strong enough to fight evil - Satan takes advantage of this willingness to fight and gets the Young Men to fight among themselves – about all manner of things. And they are so busy fighting each other that they too will miss the revival when it comes.

It is only those who are mature enough in the spirit to be called “fathers” that will be ready and available when the revival comes.

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

Yes it is true – sometimes those in positions of Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Teachers, and the like – are themselves just children. When a church has people in leadership who are still spiritual children – that church will be chasing after “the next exciting thing” so much – that they will miss the revival.

Sometimes those in positions of Leadership – are themselves just young men. They can spend so much time fighting over what the right color is - what the right way to do things is - how often it should be done - what style of service or format they should follow- or they are so busy fighting another church - That they miss the revival. Even if the church leadership is mature – if the congregation is made up of mostly “young men” - they fight the leadership so much that the church misses the revival.

When the church leadership is made up of spiritual “fathers” – and when the congregation will listen to their wise spiritual counsel – they will be ready and they will recognize the genuine revival when it comes. The young men want to fight for what they are sure is right - and they can become so intent on winning and being proven right – that they don’t or won’t listen. The fathers will tell you that there are indeed times to fight- But not about everything – and certainly not all the time.

When you find a local church that is always inciting the next battle against something or someone – then you have found a local church being led by young men. Fathers will tell you that it is so much more important to be in unity than it is important to be right! Those spiritually mature enough to be called fathers – will tell you that if we will be in unity – that there is nothing that will be impossible for us.

God is the one who declared this principle to be true. He is the one who said when a people all speak the same thing – then there is nothing that shall be impossible for them (check out the account of the tower of Babel). And there are some practical reasons to be in unity. If we are in unity and then discover that we are wrong - because we are in unity, we can change and make things right. But if we are not in unity – and some of us discover we are wrong – because we are fighting already – we may never get enough cooperation to make things right. So it is very likely that we will continue to be wrong.

Of the churches and ministers that I know personally – who have been earnestly praying for revival - it seems that most have come under attack from the enemy. Some are struggling with serious illness in their own personal family- and are being distracted from the prayer for revival. Some are struggling with a great many of their congregation doing what little children do. They are chasing after the next exciting thing - and the church leadership can’t get them to consider serious prayer for revival. Some are struggling with the young men in the church fighting over procedure – fighting over logistics. And some appear to be Just Fighting for the joy of fighting.

Please dear Christian - don’t be misled by exciting reports and begin chasing after them. Please don’t allow the enemy to get us stirred up to the point of fighting among ourselves. Please don’t let us get caught up in tunnel vision regarding serious illness – or caught up in ignoring that serious illness has come into our camp.

1 John – 13 – Children / Young Men / Fathers

Let us pray for healing and expect healing to come – while we pray for revival. Please, I beg of you, let us remain in unity – let us continue to pray for and seek revival for our community. And when it comes – we will not only be ready – we will recognize it – and we will receive revival.

Jesus said in the last times, people would come and say “the Lord is out in the desert” and people would run out to the desert. Jesus said that people would come and say “the Lord is in that city over there” and people would run over to that city. Jesus said we should be very careful when we hear reports like this. The Spiritual Fathers will be telling the people in the church these principles.

Will the children and will the young men listen to the wise counsel? Will we be so interested in playing and having good time – that we can’t hear the wise counsel – and then we miss the revival? Will we be so focused on winning and having our way that we can’t hear the wise counsel – and then miss the revival?

The Heavenly Father’s desire is for all of us to grow and to mature – so that we will all one day be spiritually mature. We need to continue to have new young children coming into the family. We need the strength of the young men to fight when fighting the enemy is necessary. But we need the counsel of the fathers to help everyone move toward spiritual maturity - and to remain protected and safe while we move toward spiritual maturity.

I will not dismiss the spiritual application of this text to our community. But there is a practical application to this as well. When the spiritual young children are chasing after the next exciting thing- and the spiritual young men are busy fighting and flexing their strength - Who is available to minister to the physical young children? If we ignore the ministry to the physical children of our congregation and our community – How will they ever hear about Jesus? How will they ever become saved?

We cannot afford to spend all our time chasing after the exciting- and we cannot afford to spend all our time pushing and shoving - and we cannot afford to spend our time resting, - because we feel we have arrived at being a spiritual father or a spiritual mother. We need to spend some time – just doing what is necessary - So that our physical young children can become spiritual young children. And we need to do what is necessary to help our spiritual young men become spiritual fathers. And we need the spiritual fathers to help us maintain the unity and the security that will only come to the young children and come to the young men as they follow wise Godly counsel.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 14 – Passing Away

In the recent lessons from 1st John - we have been told that we should not love the things of this world. We were told that if we love the things of this world – then we are not living in the Light but are living in the darkness. And we were told that if we live in darkness – then we are not with God. Because in Him is no darkness at all.

I read an article that said the 100 inch telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory has become pretty much useless for viewing distant galaxies. And similarly, the 200 inch telescope of the Mount Palomar observatory is becoming less able to view the heavenly bodies. It is not because either of these telescopes is experiencing damage or mechanical failure. It is because there has been such an increase in city lights from Los Angeles and San Diego – that these marvelous and powerful telescopes are being blinded by the glare of the worlds lights - and it is impeding their ability to see the heavenly lights.

Read 1 John 2:17 and make notes:

Now we arrive at the climax of the appeal being made by the Holy Spirit through John. It is foolish to desire the things of this world. Why? Because this world will pass away.

Earlier in this letter, we have already been told that a time of darkness will come as we approach the end of all things. The apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to tell the Corinthians, “this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corin 7). Not only will the world pass away – but the desires of this world will pass away as well. It is important to note – that the text does not tell us that “desire” will pass away. We are told specifically that the “desires of this world” will pass away.

It is reasonable to conclude that it is possible to continue to have desires – just not the desires of this world. Standing in contrast to the world and the desires of this world passing away – We find that the person who “does the will of God” LIVES FOREVER!

Those desiring the things of this world – will pass away! Those desiring the things of God – will live forever! It appears that many people today are living for the moment. They conform to the way of the things of this world. Do we not understand that this world will pass away? Do we not understand there will be a judgment for our decisions and actions?

It is a natural tendency of our flesh – to attempt to make ourselves “comfortable.” But when there is no wisdom – then there is no consideration for “later”.

I have observed a number of people who have found themselves in a wonderful opportunity. They begin to make a lot of money. They spend almost everything that comes in – enjoying the things of pleasure this world has to offer. They do not put away anything for the future – no investments – no savings. They just live and spend and enjoy with no thought of what might come later.

1 John – 14 – Passing Away

Sometimes the income continues until they reach their senior years – then they discover it is really hard to live – because they have put away nothing for the years they can no longer work. Many more times – it turns out that the prosperous income only last a few years. Then the economy changes – the market changes – or what people wants changes. Suddenly the income becomes much less – or just stops altogether – and they find it very difficult to make ends meet. Wouldn't we all agree, that it would have been wisdom for these people to “live off” of something less than the total of what they brought in - and to have put away some for later?

The Bible tells us that we should learn from the ant – who puts away supplies while they are available. But our flesh doesn't want to “live on less.” Our flesh wants all the comfort and all the pleasure we can get “right now.” That's what comes natural to our flesh isn't it?

If we can grasp this simple concept – then we are ready to consider the point of today's text. Wouldn't it be wisdom – to invest ourselves in the kingdom that is going to remain and to continue - rather than to invest ourselves in the kingdom that is going to pass away?

It is only natural for our fleshly nature to resist denying ourselves current enjoyment for any future purpose. But wisdom tells us that sometimes the future purpose is of such importance that it would really be worth our while to deny come current enjoyment so that we can have a better future. There simply is no way to take any worldly possession with us when we leave this world. Regardless of how hard we have worked for it - regardless of how valuable it may be to us - when we leave this world – all worldly possessions remain here.

Nothing about his world is permanent – nothing! Contrast this with the truth that Everything about God's Kingdom is permanent!

There are a number of examples in the Bible of people who were too attached to the things of this world:

Sampson-

Here was a man whose birth was announced by an angel. A prophecy concerning him was that he would deliver Israel from the Philistines. Sampson was a man who clearly had a divine purpose - he had a divine design for his life. He was a man who was blessed with physical strength beyond that of any other man on earth. If you take the time to read the account in Judges 13 – you will find that the Spirit of God moved on Sampson on several occasions. So he was a man who knew first hand – what it was like to have the Spirit of God move upon him and work through him.

But the story moves from glory to sadness – in chapter 14 of Judges we find that Sampson began to place his desires upon the things of this world. Sampson began to enjoy the temporary pleasures that sins claim to offer. Sampson found himself in a place where he simply wasn't able to lift his sights heavenward because he was so focused on the things of this world. Sampson – a man full of God appointed potential – never realized that potential - because he loved the things of this world.

1 John – 14 – Passing Away

If you want a little irony to mull over – The Hebrew word “Delilah” literally means “feeble.” In light of the divine strength of Sampson – it was a feeble vessel that brought him to destruction.

Solomon -

We are told that Solomon was conceived and born into a very loving and compassionate setting: 2 Samuel 12 - tells us that God loved Solomon; 1 Kings 4 - tells us that God gave Solomon exceedingly much wisdom and understanding. Solomon had divine wisdom that exceeded that of any other person on earth. He is believed to have written about 3000 proverbs – or wise saying. And he is believed to have written around 1000 songs.

In many of these wise sayings – we find words of caution that we should guard ourselves against the dangers of harlots and ungodly women. Another touch of irony is in 1 Kings 11, where we are told that Solomon loved many strange women. The very thing that Solomon preached against – is the very thing that caught his eye and trapped him.

Solomon, when being led by his fleshly desires for the things of this world – Ignored the words of caution he himself had uttered while being led by God. Solomon, became so attached to the desires of this world that he lost it all. It staggers the imagination to try and consider what “might have been” if only Solomon had resisted the temptation to love this world - and continued steadfastly to be led of God.

Then in the New Testament there is a man named Demas:

Demas is mentioned by Paul as “my fellow laborer.” He was a man very close to Paul – he had an anointing of God upon him. Demas was a man who was in the position to have picked up the mantle of Paul. Demas could have been another Timothy- but Paul later says of Demas – he has forsaken me – having loved this present world.

What a sad thing to imagine something like this being said at a person’s memorial service - “they had a life that was anointed by God – they started out on the right path – But they were sidetracked when they began to love the things of this world – More than the things of God.” I don’t want anything like that said when I pass from this world!

I read of a tribe in Africa that elects a new king every 7 years. During the 7 years as king, this man enjoys every luxury that primitive tribe has to offer. They have absolute authority even to the point of life and death over others. But at the end of the 7 years they kill that king – and then elect another – to start the cycle all over.

Every member of the tribe is aware of this policy as it has been the custom for a number of generations. What I find so interesting about this story – while every person in the tribe knows what happens at the end of 7 years as king - they always have a long list of applicants for the position when it comes open. To me, this is clear example of fleshly man being willing to forfeit future years - if they can just get current enjoyment, luxury, or power.

1 John – 14 – Passing Away

One of Satan's goals is to blind us with the glare of earthly things – so that we cannot see or focus on the heavenly things. Satan cannot stop OR alter the heavenly truths - So he tempts us to get our eyes looking at the earthly lights- So that we cannot see the heavenly lights. Satan is attempting to fill our vision with so much worldly pleasure that people will forfeit the eternity for their soul.

Sadly, it appears that in our current society, Satan is being very effective. We can see it every day - people acting as did Esau – willing to trade an invisible birthright for a visible bowl of stew.

Isn't it interesting – that a person will forfeit God's potential for them? A person will trade God's purpose for them - so that they can enjoy worldly pleasure right now. And then that same person will act like they are mad at God - complaining about God sending them to hell!

Read Mark 8:36 and make notes:

We Christians do live in this world – but we cannot fall in love with this World! Every one of us has been saved for a purpose. We all have a divine purpose: First to live out as an example – the life of a Christian; Secondly to share with others how they too can become a Christian. But sadly, we find a great many Christians today who are so much in love with the things of this world - that we are simply wasting our potential.

Let's ask ourselves: Are we willing to go bankrupt into eternity – just so we can enjoy worldly treasures now?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 15 – Anti-Christ Today

Some Bible scholars see this as a brand new section in this 1st letter of John. But it is still linked to the earlier part of the letter. The readers of this letter have already been told that this world is passing away. He now begins to tell them that the end of this age is fast approaching.

The signs are clear – this is the “last hour”. Please don’t lose track of the simple fact that this letter began with a warning about the false teachers. And this is a continuation of the concern about the damage these false teachers can do.

Read 1 John 2:18 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit prompts John to write to his readers as though they are his children. At this point, there is no force in the wording of the letter. There is simply the wording of fatherly concern. It may very well be true that John had genuine concern for these people and perhaps he looked at them with the fondness of a father toward his children.

But please don’t overlook the fact that the Holy Spirit is telling John what to write And is there any doubt that the Heavenly Father sees these people as “children”? He calls them this to show that he loves them. He loves them as a father loves his children. He feels that he is responsible for them. He cares as parents care for their children. He is eager to warn them about the dangers that are coming. Again, you can see John as the “he” mentioned here if you want to - But please don’t leave the Heavenly Father out of this “HE”.

They are told that it is the last hour. The original word used here can refer to a short period of time, but it can also refer to a period of time with some length to it. The phrase “the last day” refers specifically to the final point in world history – Or to the day of the coming of Jesus in judgment – The “last hour” has more of the sense of “the lasts days”.

Many have argued about what John really meant by these words. While we can continue to debate what he meant – there is plenty of evidence that the early Christians regarded the first and second coming of Jesus as constituting the “last days”. Peter, in his Pentecost Sermon said the prophecy of Joel about the “last days” was being fulfilled.

Human logic goes something like this, “Since the final period in world history had been inaugurated by the coming of Jesus, surely there can’t be much time until his second coming!”

I can’t help but believe that there were people in John’s day just like people in our current day. We have people every year who tell us the end is upon us. Some say it is because we have failed to curb the population growth around the globe. Some say it is because of the industrial pollution we are creating. Some say it is the increasing corruption of government. And there is quite list of reasons why the end of the world is imminent.

1 John – 15 – Anti-Christ Today

If we study this letter carefully, we cannot find any commitment to a time scale. There is no precise expected date of the second coming - But there is an urgency to get ready – or to be ready. I think John knew – but even if he didn't – the Holy Spirit who was guiding him did know that with God a day is like a thousand years – (2 Pet 3). We are also told in the New Testament that the Lord will come when we least expect Him – So we should be ready at all times.

John calls the time when they were living 'the last hour'. By this, he means the final time before the return of Christ. Then the end of the world will come. This time began with the start of the church. It will end after Christ has come back to the earth.

This means that we today are living in that last time. Jesus called the present age an evil age. He looked forward to the age that is to come. That age has already come in part. The true light has come (verse 17). The present age is the darkness and it is ending. The age to come will be completely here when the Lord Jesus rules the earth.

The main concern of this letter is to warn the people about these false teachings that are trying to come into the church. They have probably already heard that "anti-Christ" would come in the last days. These "anti-Christ" will deny that Jesus actually came in the flesh. These "anti-Christ" oppose the true teachings about Jesus. Some of these "anti-Christ" will actually try to stand in the place of Jesus.

The teachers in the churches would have taught about these false Christs. They would have told about the last and most dangerous of these. They called him the Antichrist.

Jesus did warn His followers that in the last days – false Christ would come along with the false prophets (Matt 2). Jesus said they would do what appears to be miracles and perform signs and wonders. Jesus also said, they would try to deceive the very elect of God.

This text isn't saying that "The Anti-Christ" has come. It says that "many anti-Christ" have come. There shouldn't be any mistaking the fact that this letter is calling these false teachers – "anti-Christ" - in the sense that they are opposed to the true teachings about Jesus.

If we wanted to put this in more modern terminology we could say, "these false teachers are being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ. When "The" anti-Christ does come - He will be the enemy of Christ. He will be an evil man who will try to destroy the church. He will gain power over all the earth. Then the Lord Jesus Christ will come and defeat him.

But before THE Antichrist comes, there will be many false Christs. Some had already come in the time when John was writing. There have been many since then. Some are at work in the world today. They are people who oppose Christ. They try to destroy all that Christ has done. They are the enemies of the church and of Christians.

The false Christs have the same evil purpose as we will see in the Antichrist. They hate the Lord Jesus Christ. They hate all those who belong to him. And they try all kinds of things to deceive God's people. And if they cannot deceive us - then they work to distract us from what is true.

1 John – 15 – Anti-Christ Today

We must be vigilant and careful today - not to be led astray. And not to be distracted by the counterfeit.

Many false Christs have come. This shows that we live in the last time. Those who oppose Christ are increasing. This shows that the end is near. We live in the last period before the Lord Jesus comes again. But we do not know how long this period will be.

This letter we call 1st John is telling the Church about the spirit of anti-Christ. It tells them that there are many people in the world that are anti-Christ or anti-truth. And it tells them that they would know that they were living in the last days when these things come to pass.

I know that we are living in the last days. Jesus could come at any time. We are living in an upside down world. A person doing wrong is seen as person doing right. Evil reigning seems to be normal in our society.

It's always right to do right, - and it's always wrong to do wrong.

Our society really is anti-Christian. God wants us to be “on fire Christians” in an anti-Christian world. We are believers living in a world of unbelievers. The message in 1st John is for us today. Are we paying attention?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 15 – Anti-Christ Today

(this page for additional notes)

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

In the previous verse, this letter said that there is evidence that we are living in the Last Days. That evidence is seen in the fact that there are so many people who “anti” whatever is Christian.

Read 1 John 2:19 and make notes:

If we take this verse at face value, it indicates these false teachers had originally been part of the Christian community – or the church. At the time of this letter, they had gone out from the church and become part of the “world”. This is not talking about a “church split” – where a group from a church leaves and starts another “competing” church in the area. This is talking about people who were part of the church – and have now left and who are making it distinctly clear that they are no longer part of the church.

There were people who had become teachers in the church. We don’t know from this letter whether these people were conscious of the fact that they were believing false doctrines when they became teachers - Or if they were sincere in their desire to be a teacher, - but simply were not grounded in the True Word of God.

What we do know is that they left the church in order to follow the wisdom and logic of their own minds – rather than following the Word of God.

It is important that we do not disconnect this verse from the previous one. There were many people being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ when John wrote this letter. This letter clearly places these false teachers in that group. They had caused problems in the church. They had then left the church with “their” group. They were no longer part of the church.

The truth is that these people had never really belonged in the church. By their actions, they showed that they were not true Christians at all. If they had truly been Christians, they would not have left the church.

It wasn’t an isolated problem. It was a problem that was – and is – Common among churches. Paul warned the leaders of the church at Ephesus in

Read Acts 20:30 and make notes:

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

In one of letters to Timothy, Paul warns against giving recent converts a place of leadership in the church. They are not well grounded in the Word of God. They are susceptible to pride. And many of us have seen it happen in our contemporary society. A new Christian is ushered into a place of leadership in the church- And it isn't long until the local church they are in is going off into some false doctrine. Or many people have been hurt – including this one who was placed in leadership before they had a time to mature.

This letter of John is addressing a different situation. This is about those who were never really a Christian Believer to begin with.

A number of people believe that in those days, there would have been just one church in each locality. I believe a good case can be made for there being several house churches in at least the larger towns and cities. Whatever was the case in those days – we now have many churches in any given town or locality. But all those who believe the word of God, are part of the one true church.

The false teachers and those who followed them had left the church. They went away to show that they did not believe. By doing this, they made it clear that they did not belong in the church.

It is noteworthy that these people were not excommunicated. They were not thrown out of the church. These people left the church of their own choosing. These phonies physically left because they were fakers of faith and never connected or committed spiritually. They were never converted – They never experienced regeneration - They no doubt claimed to have faith in Christ to some degree.

This may seem like a very small thing – but there are 3 very important points being revealed in this text:

.1. There are Counterfeits

There is an important difference between the “visible” church and the “real” church. We must be aware that there is a very distinct difference in people who outwardly claim to be a member of the church – and those who are known by the Lord Jesus Christ to be his own.

There are “church people” and then there are “Christians”. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian – is really a Christian. Not everyone who claims to be a member of a local church – is a member of THE Church.

In any local church – there are no doubt counterfeit Christians in the visible church. On any given day, the counterfeit Christian and the authentic Christian may look alike. But over the long haul – through the course of everyday life – the authentic Christians become more and more distinguishable from the counterfeit Christians.

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

It is important that we recognize this reality – so that we are not thrown into confusion when someone leaves the church. If you want a rule of thumb to use – please no legal briefs need to be filed – When you see someone who comes into a local church and immediately begins asking for a place of leadership - Or immediately begins campaigning for a place of leadership - They are probably not a real Christian. They are at the very least an immature Christian.

When you see someone who attends a local church at least somewhat regularly – and then you notice that they never actually do anything except “show up”- they are either not yet a Christian - Or they are at least an immature Christian.

You will recognize the mature Believers by their desire and willingness to serve others - Without any desiring recognition for it.

.2. They were never part of the Church

This is actually a word of comfort to those early Christians – and to us today if we grasp the significance of this statement. When those early Christians saw someone who was – for a time – a teacher in the church - and now they are off believing and expressing false doctrines. Some would worry – “what if I lose my authenticity?” - “What if I become a false Christian?” - “You mean they are being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ – what if it gets me and makes me a fake?”

Some today have that same kind of worry about themselves – as they have seen someone they held in a place of respect – and now see them going off in weird things – and sometimes clearly teaching things that are opposite the True Gospel of Christ Jesus.

The people in John’s day were told – and we are told – that those who could leave the church – were never really part of the church. It was not that these people were for a time real Christians – and then something happened that perverted them and caused them to depart from authenticity to anti-Christian. Those who could be led by the spirit of the anti-Christ were never really part of the church to begin with.

The short version – “this could not happen to a genuine believer.” But their going from the church was in reality a very good thing for the church!

There is a mental disorder that happens to some people where they strongly desire to have an arm or a leg cut off. These people beg for someone to amputate a perfectly good limb because they have this strong desire to be an amputee.

I don’t know about you – but I have never had the desire to have any part of my body cut off and thrown away. However, when I was told that there was a part of my body that had gone bad – it was making some cancer cells instead of healthy skin cells – I said very clearly, “doctor, cut long and cut deep.” For the sake and for the long term health of the genuine and healthy skin cells – it was a good thing to remove the diseased cells.

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

We have people in our church family who can explain this much better than I can - So if this needs “explaining” please go to one of them. Our fleshly bodies must make new cells everyday in order for us to remain healthy and alive. When our fleshly body stops making new cells – we die. We need new blood cells every day - We need new skin cells every day - But our body needs healthy new cells and not diseased new cells.

If we discover we have a malignant tumor attached to any part of our otherwise healthy body – While we would not like to experience being cut – and we would not look forward to the experience of healing from being cut - In the long run – we would surely be happier and healthier to have the malignant part removed.

If there are false teachers – and even if they are not a teacher – if there is anyone who is being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ - The church is so much healthier and will be so much better off in the long run if that malignant part – that one being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ – is removed from the body of Christ.

So, even though it pains “this” pastor every time anyone leaves this church – I have come to understand the departure from the church by some people is very beneficial to the long term health of the church.

.3. Our Goal Must Not Be to Simply Increase the Number in Attendance.

We must be about fulfilling the “Great Commission.” We must be doing whatever the Lord leads us to do in order to fulfill the primary purpose of the Church. And it doesn’t take long to realize that God calls different local churches to do different specific things as a means of getting the True Gospel message out to the community and to the world.

There are so many different methods of local outreach and so many different methods of foreign missions outreach. And for any of these – it can seem practical to try to get as large of a local congregation as possible. The more people in our church – the more workers we are likely to have – The more people – the larger the work pool. And the more people – the more likely the offerings will be larger – which means we would have more finances to do the things we feel led to do. However, if our goal becomes simply to increase those in attendance – we are going to find many more false Christians becoming part of the church.

Let me share an analogy with you: There is a time when fishing with a net is what needs to be done. But when you fish with a net, you catch all kinds of things - Not only all kinds of fish – but all kinds of things – even things that are not fish.

If we go about sharing the Gospel Message in the way that God calls us to do. We will be more like the person fishing with a specific bait rather than with a net.

Unlike the person fishing with a net – The person fishing with a specific bait – only attracts those to whom that bait is appealing.

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

The church who is fishing by sharing the gospel message of accepting Jesus as Savior AND as Lord - The church who is fishing with the message that not only hearts – but lives can be changed - is going to catch a lot fewer fish than the church that fishes using “attendance getting” methods. But the church fishing with the specific purpose of changing lives is going to have deal with a lot fewer people led by the spirit of the anti-Christ.

So, what are we to do with these 3 little points brought to light by this verse?

Not everyone who gets into doctrinal error is a false Christian. Genuine Christians can be tricked – we can be taught something wrong – and we can find out that we are believing something that is Biblically wrong.

It is an easy difference between the Authentic Christian and the false Christian. The Authentic Christian will keep comparing themselves - and what they believe - to “what does the Word of God say?” And they will repent and change what they believe when it doesn’t line up with God’s Word

The person being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ – will become combative – They will condemn those who disagree with them – they will try to “put down” or intimidate those who challenge what they believe

We should not live out our Christian life worrying that we might become a false teacher. We should not live out our Christian life worrying about becoming one who is led by the spirit of the anti-Christ. We should only be concerned about checking everything against the Word of God. As long as it lines up there – we are okay in what we believe and what we teach. And as long as we check everything against God’s Word – we will not be susceptible to the leading of the spirit of the anti-Christ.

Let’s examine ourselves honestly today:

Using God’s Word as the standard – Am I an authentic genuine Christian – Or do I have my own ideas about how to serve God and live life?

Am I a genuine part of the church and would I be out of place away from the church? Or Could I be content to live apart from the church? Would I be happy without the fellowship and the corporate worship?

What do I want for the church? Do I just want everyone to come onboard – The more - the merrier? Or do I desire to see changed lives – changed hearts – changed attitudes?

How we answer these questions – tells us and others a great deal about our authenticity as a Christian. This is also a good way to prepare our hearts to partake of communion.

Let us ask ourselves, “Am I an authentic Christian?” As I survey the evidence of my lifestyle- My habits, my words, and my private thoughts - Does the evidence indicate authentic Christianity Or does the evidence indicate “probably not”

1 John – 16 – Authentic Christian

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

Earlier in this letter, we read about those being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ. We were told these people were never really Christians – while they claimed to be part of the Church they were just counterfeit Christians.

This next section begins by expressing something of a contrast between those being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ who have left the church and the genuine Christians who are led by the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 John 2:20 and make notes:

The word translated “anointing” is the Greek word “chrisma.” This isn’t the word “charisma” but “chrisma.” The words in the original language of this verse – literally would translate to the, “ointment that is rubbed in.”

This is talking about an anointing that is very from the anointing of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the anointing was poured out; here it is speaking of an anointing that was “rubbed in”. Just hold onto that thought for a few minutes.

The false teachers said that they had secret knowledge. They made claims of having special sources of knowledge beyond that of the Christians. This special knowledge was only for those who followed their ideas. The Holy Spirit teaches the truth to all Christians True knowledge comes from the Lord alone.

In contrast to the false teachers, Who claim to have access to truth, the Christians KNOW the truth. This true knowledge is not just for a special few. It is for all who belong to Christ. The Spirit of God comes upon those who believe. He teaches them what is true.

This is what Jesus promised. He said, ‘The Spirit of truth will come. When he comes, he will guide you into all truth’ (John 16:13). In Hebrews 10:15-18, We are told that the Holy Spirit will “write his laws on the hearts and minds of believers.

Believers may not be able to give chapter and verse - but we just know certain things are right and certain things are wrong. Genuine Christians will know the difference between the true and the false. Because they know God. And they know that Jesus is the Christ.

Read 1 John 2:21 and make notes:

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

The Holy Spirit did not inspire John to write this because the believers lacked knowledge. But it is to encourage believers. He wanted to reassure them of the validity of their knowledge. And He wants them to “act on” what they know. Because they know the truth, he is able to teach them more of the truth. They know the truth. They can recognize what is false. They also know that no lie comes from the truth. The truth comes from God.

God cannot cause error and God does not teach error. We can tell that the false teachers do not come from God because God always teaches the truth.

Read 1 John 2:22 and make notes:

One lie in particular – above all other lies - identifies those who are being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ. This verse shows what is at the foundation of all the false teachings, and false teachers. They oppose the truth about Jesus. Some of them say that Jesus is not the Christ. Some separate the man Jesus from the Christ who is God. Some teach that Jesus was not in himself both God and man. These are of the most evil and wicked lies. Any such message opposes the most important principle of the gospel.

The Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. He had to be both God and man to be able to take away our sins. The lie of the false teachers says that the Christ was not in the baby Jesus. It means also that the Christ did not die in the death of Jesus. If that were so then Jesus was not the Son of God. The death of a mere man could not save us. That death wouldn't be enough to take away the sins of anyone else. The person who tells such a lie is a false Christ. This is the same Antichrist attitude that is in all of those who are false Christ'.

Some of the false teachers probably did not realize that they denied God the Father. They may have thought that they believed in God. But if Jesus is not the Son of God then God is not the Father. Without the Son, there is no Father.

The Father and Jesus Christ the Son are a unity in the one God. So to deny one is to deny the other one as well.

Read 1 John 2:23 and make notes:

Some people said that they know God. But they denied the Son. Therefore, they have neither the Father nor the Son. We know God only by the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not accept Jesus as the Son of God, we cannot know God the Father.

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

Real Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They know the Son, so they know the Father also. By the Son, they relate to God as his children. God is their father.

To deny Jesus as God is to deny the Christian doctrine of God. The Christian doctrine of a personal relationship with God is completely dependent upon Jesus being the son of God. Those who reject Jesus as the source of knowledge of God - and those who reject Jesus as the only avenue to God - have deprived themselves of any real knowledge or access to God.

Read 1 John 2:24 and make notes:

The “See that” phrase at the beginning of v24, clearly implies an intentional effort on our part. We are the ones who are expected to take action – to take care – to make certain - That we do not lose or forget the original gospel message.

What the gospel teaches came from Christ himself. The first readers of this letter heard the gospel from those who had first believed it. They knew the truth about the Father and the Son. They believed that Jesus is the Christ. When they believed these things, their Christian lives began. They are told that they must be sure that they do not lose that truth. And it is just a true today – When we take a good close look at our contemporary society it would be easy to say it is even more important today.

Read 1 John 2:25 and make notes:

To remain in the Son and in the Father is to have eternal life. This is the new life in the spirit. This life will never end. The Lord Jesus has promised this life to all believers. He gives life to his people now. They will always live with God. This eternal life has begun in all those people who trust in Christ.

We have this life now. But this is nothing compared to what will come. The full experience of this life will be ours in the future. This will happen when the Lord Jesus takes us from this earth. Then we shall live with him in heaven.

Read 1 John 2:26 and make notes:

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

The Holy Spirit in this letter has called these people “false teachers” – He has called them “false Christ.” He has said they are being led by the spirit of the anti-Christ.” And now he identifies the true motive for what they are doing and what they are teaching. They desire to lead the Genuine Christians away from God and away from Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit was eager to correct the errors that they taught. He wanted to be sure that none of his readers follow the lies of the false teachers.

Read 1 John 2:27 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit always teaches us the truth. These false teachers try to lead Christians away from the truth. But the Christians have God’s Spirit in them. The Lord Jesus sends God’s Spirit to live in his people.

God’s Spirit will lead us into the truth. If we listen to him, we will know the truth. He will show us what is false.

Christians do not need anyone else to decide for them what is right or wrong. They know what is right or wrong by God’s Spirit in them.

The Holy Spirit often teaches us through people. But we need to be careful that we only listen to those who are being led by the Holy Spirit. Christians have to test what their teachers teach.

This is what God’s Spirit does for the Christian. He shows the Christian what to believe. And he shows him or her what to refuse. God’s Spirit is real and he always leads us to and reveals to us - the truth. He can never teach what is false. So, his people can always trust him. As the Spirit of God has taught them, so they must remain in Christ.

What should we take home with us from this text?

The anointing that genuine Christians receive when we are saved is distinctly different from any anointing being offered by false teachers.

- .1. the anointing genuine Christians have received is a sufficient source of knowledge about God.**
- .2. the teachings brought to us by way of this anointing are reliable and there is no lie in them.**
- .3. we are to remain in this anointing of true knowledge rather than seeking “special anointings” being offered by false teachers**

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

Do you remember the literal meaning of the word translated “anointing” in v20? - “an ointment that is rubbed in”? It appears today that so many Christians are seeking a single experience. Our effectiveness in walking out the Christian daily lifewill be determined by how long we linger and soak in God’s glory.

God desires for us to linger in His presence and to allow His anointing to “sink into” the depths of who we are. The anointing is always given for a specific purpose – not just to make us feel good.

We may indeed get a “feeling” - It might be “warmth” – it might be “electrifying” – it might be “energizing”- But the “feeling” we experience is not the intended purpose. We are to remain in the presence of the Holy Spirit’s anointing to allow it the time and opportunity to “soak in”

To “sink into” our being until every part of us has been touched and affected by the anointing. Not just our words – But until our heart, our thoughts, even our attitude has been affected by the anointing. The anointing is to have an impact upon who we are and how we respond to life.

It is not enough merely to hear the gospel. The truth must be present and active in our lives. What we believe - must affect our daily lives.

If we are in fact a genuine Christians – as we believe the truth, we will be united with the Lord. We will live with the Son and with the Father. When The Truth is in us - We are in the Son and in the Father.

This letter mentions the Son first. This shows how we can know the Father. We can know the Father only by the Son.

Brothers and Sisters, we are warned about false teachers. The false teachers in John’s day tried to lead people away from the truth. And that’s what they plan to do today. We are to “see to it” that we do not accept any message that tries to change the gospel The original readers of this letter needed to guard the truth. And so do believers today.

The only effective antidote for false teachings – is to keep coming back to the Word of God - Or to keep coming back to the “original gospel”.

So, how are we doing? Have we lingered with the Presence of the Holy Spirit until it has affected every part of our being?

In our daily lifestyle - is there any Outward Indications that the Holy Spirit has had any effect on us?

Do We keep coming back to the Word of God?

1 John – 17 – Outward Indications

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 18 – Walk In Confidence

Following a number of negative statements regarding the anti-Christ spirit of the false teachers – We were instructed to make ourselves available to the presence of the Holy Spirit. And to remain in His presence to allow for the anointing to be “rubbed in” or thoroughly soak into us.

The intended purpose was so that we would have “outward indications” - on a daily basis – that the Holy Spirit’s anointing was a reality in our life. We are now at a place in this letter where are going to get a positive word of encouragement.

Read 1 John 2:28 and make notes:

“dear children” – returns to a tone of voice that indicates tenderness

“continuing in Christ” is the true and sure antidote to all of the false teachings.

‘Now’ recognises that this is the last time (see 2:18). When this period ends, the Lord Jesus will come again. So, continue to live in unity with Christ. We must not allow anything to lead us away from the Lord. We are to remain in him. Then we will be confident when he comes. We will not be afraid of him. We can have this confidence because he will come as a friend.

“so that when we appears” –

while we are not certain of the “when” – We are very certain that Jesus is coming back! We do not know when this will be. But we can be certain that he will come. And when he does, we want to be ready for him.

“in spite of” the reality of the false teachers - “even though” they have made a hurtful impact upon the church family - “we can be confident” In Jesus’ return. So don’t be enticed by the temptation of the false teachers - AND don’t be discouraged by their apparent affect – Or their seeming success – But instead “continue in Jesus.”

Read 1 John 2:29 and make notes:

There are today, just like there were in those days - some who are genuine Christians, but they are young and immature – they don’t yet know much of God’s Word - they haven’t walked with Christ Jesus for very long - they haven’t had the opportunity to learn His heart and attitude - they only know Him as the One who forgave them of their sins - the One who cleansed them from their unrighteous actions - and the One who is their Savior. They haven’t yet come to know Him as a close and intimate companion. The young and immature Christian usually has a view of God as being a harsh judge who punishes the sinner.

1 John – 18 – Walk In Confidence

To the young and immature especially – but to all believers - this verse is a word of encouragement. Christ is righteous. There is no doubt about that. It is in the character of God that he is righteous. So, those who are His children will show some of that same character.

We are not born of God by means of our good deeds. We are born into God's family by His Grace through faith. But those who are born of God will do the right things. We do have to grow and mature in our walk with God in order to do the right thing consistently

But even as young Christians, we will desire to do the right thing. And we will put forth some effort to do the right thing. Can't you just hear the tenderness in the voice at this point? "Dear one", please be assured that being in Christ's family is reason to celebrate and rejoice – Even at the prospect of Jesus' coming again. Oh, "little one", don't be afraid – You and I are righteous, not because of what we have done, But because of what He has done. And the way we can know that we are born again- Is because we continue to try to do the right thing.

Those who no longer even try to do the right thing - are not genuine. But you are because you continue with Jesus in your daily life. So, "be confident" – in regards to His coming again - Because we have been "born of Him."

The word "coming", in v8, is the Greek word "parousia."

This word was typically used to speak of a ruler visiting some part of their dominion. The word "parousia" wasn't used for a visit by one relative to another – nor was it used for a visit between friends. It was used when someone of importance was coming to our area – and it communicated that this would be a time of celebration and rejoicing.

The word "parousia" conveys the message that Jesus is coming back as someone important. And when He comes – it will be a reason for celebration and rejoicing.

This simple word – being used in this little letter – carries such a big message. Jesus isn't "just coming back" – Jesus is coming back in splendor – Jesus is coming back in majesty. When Jesus comes back, He will be coming to our area as the arrival of the King.

In our modern world – we can see the face of a king or president of a nation on the TV screen every day – and yet, when that person makes a personal visit to a city – people will turn out in a great crowd – just to see them in person – even if it is from quite a few feet away.

Some people will travel for several hours to get to the city where the president is going to make his appearance. We can only imagine that the excitement of getting to see the king was even greater in the ancient world. They didn't have the TV to see visual images of their king. They could only get reports from others.

So, when the word would get out that the king was coming to their area – we can understand that a great crowd would gather. It would certainly be a time of celebration – it would be a time of rejoicing to get to be in the same vicinity as the king. But maybe it wouldn't be a time of celebration for everyone.

1 John – 18 – Walk In Confidence

What about those people who had displeased the king or those who had been disobedient to the king's commands? Do you think these people would want to gather where the king was going to be? Do you think they would want to be out in the open where the king might see them?

I think these people would be really unhappy to hear that the king is coming to their town or village. And by the time the king arrived – they would probably be trying to be as hidden and as far out of sight as possible. These people would be “ashamed before him at his coming.”

But the people who were sure they had done all they could to please the king. The people who were sure they had been obedient to the king's commands. The people who were sure the king was pleased with them – they would be confident that the king's coming to their area could only be a great and glorious event. These people “could be” confident. These people would be “unashamed before him at his coming”

Verse 9 brings about an interesting side of the pending visit by King Jesus - when it tells us that we are “born of Him.” What about those who are relatives of this visiting King? The relatives certainly would not be afraid. The relatives would stand confidently that the king – one of their own family - is likely to give or provide something good to them. The family members would be on the opposite end of the spectrum from those who are afraid of the king coming.

Here is something that will help you understand why some people are acting the way they do: Those who are genuine Christians – are aware that Christ is spiritually present with them every day – and as a result – we can walk in a confidence and in a continuing state of being “unashamed.” Those who are not in relationship with Jesus – those who are not being obedient to Jesus – while they may not be willing to admit it openly – they are walking around with a continuous state of “being ashamed.” That's a major part of why people who are not in union with Christ Jesus try to avoid Christians. To be in the presence of Christians is to be in the presence of Christ – and that is an uncomfortable place for unsaved people to be – and it is a very uncomfortable place for Christians to be when they know they are not living right.

What about me?

Even though I tell others that I am a Christian - Do I look forward to being with Christians? Or do I try to avoid being with Christians? The answer to this question is a clue – If we would just pay attention.

What if we received a reliable word that Jesus is coming back Today? If we knew for sure Jesus was coming back in the next few hours - What would be the attitude of our heart?

Here's what I am sure of: If the condition of my heart is right with Jesus - Then I will be joyously excited and looking forward to His coming. But if the condition of my heart is not right with Jesus- tThen I will be ashamed and worried about Him coming.

Have I been obedient in my words?

Have I been obedient in my actions?

Have I been obedient in my attitude?

1 John – 18 – Walk In Confidence

God wants everyone – not only to be “able” to be happy about Jesus’ coming back – but He wants all of us to actually be joyously excited about His return. And if we are excited about His coming back - we will walk in confidence – daily – and we will be much more immune to the enticements of the false teachers along the way.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

This section of the letter helps make the connection between the earlier thoughts expressed in the letter. Here the ideas of the new birth in Jesus Christ and the concept of Jesus' return are connected. So let's feast on these next few verses.

Read 1 John 3:1 and make notes:

God loves us and makes us his children. It is something of a wonder isn't it – how much the Father in heaven loves us?

When we consider the magnitude of the love He has poured out on us – Wow ! How great! How wonderful! How marvelous! When we consider what kind of people we once were – lost – sinful in attitude, heart, thought, word, and deed - And now we realize that we have been allowed to become beloved children of God! And then, when we consider some of the statements that indicate we, as children of God, will receive even higher places with God at the coming of Jesus!

How do we not fall into an almost dumbfounded state of awe? And while the world around us – probably doesn't imagine the status that we have been given now – they can't even begin to perceive the status we have in store for us.

The world's lack of perception – in no way diminishes the status we have – it is real. Those who believe are his children. So, he is the father of all Christians. We have been born again of God.

The Father loves each one of us with a great love. His love is so much more than any other love. And we are able to know this love because he sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins.

We can be God's children only because of this love. It is a love that is at first strange to us – it is not a natural fleshly love. We can understand a love for others who have treated us nice – Or for those who have been good to us.

We have trouble getting our minds around loving someone who has been disrespectful to us. We have trouble grasping how to love someone who has betrayed us over and over. And yet, here is God loving us so deeply, even after the many times of rebellion and disrespect from us.

God's love is so much better than any other love. This love makes us children of God. We had nothing to do with this birth. It all comes from God's love for us. And with such thoughts and considerations in mind – this is how this chapter begins “Oh, How great is the love the Father has lavished on us.”

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

This letter has moved from the thought of “new birth” in Jesus Christ to the thought of how great is the love that is shown to us by God. Let me share with you this verse from a Scottish paraphrase of Scriptures prepared by Isaac Watts:

“Behold, the amazing gift of love
the Father hath bestowed on us,
the sinful sons of men, to call us
sons of God”

This package of love that the Heavenly Father has “poured out” on us – or has lavished upon us – this package of love includes the gift of being called “children of God.” In the Gospel of Matthew (chp 5) – Jesus promised a blessing for those who make peace: “they will be called sons of God.” In this letter of John, this promise of blessing is now given to all disciples of Jesus.

Don’t make too much out of this – but doesn’t it make you wonder – just a little? Jesus said those who work for peace will be called “sons of God.”

The Holy Spirit through John said that all the disciples of Jesus will be called “children of God” Wouldn’t that mean – that all genuine disciples of Jesus will work for peace? And if we claim to be a believer, but refuse to work toward peace – then maybe we are not a real disciple? Like I said, don’t make too much out of it, but it is worth pondering just a little.

Believers have become part of God’s own family. We are the children of God now. We are his children and not just by name. We are his children in reality.

The people of the world do not know God. They did not recognize Jesus when he was on the earth. And because the people of the world do not know God, they cannot know his children.

The world doesn’t understand that Christians are God’s children. And many Christians don’t understand that we do not really belong to the world. We are like strangers whose home is elsewhere.

This verse goes a little further – for the people in those days are just like the people today. There were some legalistic – split the hair – dogmatic about the law kind of people. The Holy Spirit doesn’t just leave it at the statement that believers are “called children of God.” He emphatically states “And that is what we are!”

That kind of takes away the argument of analogy doesn’t it! If you want to argue over birth or adoption, go ahead – the bottom line is that we are declared “children of God.” We are not simply called “children of God.” The reason we are called “children of God” is that WE ARE God’s children!

This reality helps explain another thing we have to contend with in the world. The world doesn’t know us as “children of God” – BECAUSE they did not know Jesus. When the people of this world – treat us as though we are an alien – when they treat us as not belonging – or as someone who is very different – Then that stands as an indication that we are God’s children.

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

Why would a statement like this be important enough for the Holy Spirit to take the time to inspire someone to write it down?

Today, just like in those days, when a believer experiences persecution by the people of the world - we begin to feel cut off from God. It is so common to hear a believer cry out “where is God” - when they begin to experience painful situations and circumstances. It is times like this is when Satan, or one of his helpers, will come to the believer and say, “you should just give up.” And this can range from walking away from the faith all the way to committing suicide. This little statement in this letter – stands as an encouragement for times like this.

When we find ourselves being ostracized and discriminated against by the world. This is an evidence to say that we are God’s children. So rather than listening to the tempter to just give up – It is a reason to celebrate – not that we are persecuted – but that we have evidence that we are God’s children – and all the promises to God’s children are in store for us.

Read 1 John 3:2 and make notes:

When Jesus returns, we shall be like him. We are God’s children now. The fact that we are children of God has been established – maybe for some of us we have experienced the evidence of this truth. This is “good knowledge” to have, isn’t it? But he has not shown us what we shall be like in the future. We don’t yet know all the future benefits for God’s children.

And now we read something about a contrast. A contrast between what we know and what we don’t yet know. We have knowledge of our present state – and our present status - But we don’t know exactly what our future state and status will be like. We just know that it is something much better than the present state and status.

We are right now “children of God” – but our future status is something higher. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write:

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9 and make notes:

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

There are many aspects of our future that we humans can't seem to help but wonder about our natural curiosity causes us to ask questions about "what it will be like" – "where exactly will we be" – "what will we be doing" – and this list is quite long.

We know that God will change us.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51 and make notes:

We will not always live as we live now. The future will be much better. But one fact is certain. We shall be like Christ, the Son of God.

One day the Lord Jesus will come back. Then we shall see Jesus Christ as he is. When we see him, we shall change. All his people will change to be like him.

No one can ever be equal to him. We will not become God as he is. But we will be similar to him in many ways. We will live with God the Father and with the Lord Jesus. We will never die. We will be clean from sin and there will be no more sin to come into our lives. As Jesus is holy, so he will make us holy.

This verse continues the encouragement to believers. Here's one thing we know about our future status – whatever it is that Jesus really is like today – when Jesus comes back – we will exactly like Him.

We will see Him "as he is" – We won't be looking upon Jesus through some veil. It won't be the veil of human ideas or understanding - It won't be the veil of human religious teachings and doctrines - It won't be the veil of a cloudy day or foggy vision - We will see him Just as he is.

Jesus accepted me "just as I am" - and one day "Hallelujah" – he will make me "just as he is!"

Read 1 John 3:3 and make notes:

The first 2 verses of this chapter gives believers a solid basis for Christian confidence and joy. It is apparent as we read this letter of 1st John that one of the main goals of the Holy Spirit was to strengthen and encourage the believer's faith. The original readers of this letter didn't have to imagine or have suspicion. They knew they were living in a world that was hostile toward Christians. They had also been noticeably rocked by the large number of people who had left the church to follow after the false teachers.

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

Surely, we can understand these people needed some encouragement – just like many believers today. The first couple of verses in this chapter reminded them of some of the privileges we have as Christians. And reminded them of the hope we have in the future of Jesus’ coming back for us.

We have just been told that we will “be like him” when He returns. And now we are told something very significant. Everyone of us that genuinely has this hope in Jesus – We will be busy “purifying” ourselves - Jesus is pure – and every genuine believer has this desire to be pure.

Genuine believers recognize that we are not pure – Genuine believers don’t deny this reality - And we don’t pretend that we are pure - But Genuine believers have a desire to be better than we currently are. And Genuine Believers actively pursue becoming pure – “like he is.”

I have frequently encountered this reality as a pastor. Some people will acknowledge their lack of personal purity - And will respond with something like “yeah, but God knows I am like this.” While others will acknowledge their personal lack of purity - And will respond with sincere hurt over their not being pure.

Do you see the difference? The first group of people may claim to be a Christian - But when there is no desire to become pure like Jesus. This tells us that they are not genuine – they are not really a Christian. The second group of people don’t just claim to be a Christian. They are deeply sorry for having an impure attitude - They are deeply sorry for having sinful thoughts - They are deeply sorry that they “want to hurt” the person who has hurt them. And they are working toward becoming pure - Not only in word and deed, - But also in attitude and in thought.

It is easy to find a person who claims to be a Christian who is not pure - Because that’s pretty much all of us who are still on this earth. But when we find a person who claims to be a Christian and is genuinely sorry about their lack of personal purity – Now my friends –we have found “the real thing.”

Jesus said “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt5:8). We will not be allowed into the presence of God if we are impure. I know there are some who think, “why should we put forth the effort to get sin out of our life now, when we are going to be changed to be like Jesus when he comes back?” - “After all, it is hard work to get sin out of my life – let’s just wait and let him do it on that day.”

I could give a simple and short answer like - “the very fact that you don’t mind the sin being in your life right now” – or “the fact that you don’t want to get it out – indicates you are not really a Christian.” But allow me to give you an analogy that will help.

Imagine that impure thoughts and attitudes adhering to our spirit man - much like things that adhere to our skin so tightly that when removed, they tend to take a little layer of skin with it. There are several things – but super glue will work for this illustration.

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

Imagine the super glue has covered a large area of you body. You can pull this stuff off all at one time – and there will be great pain - Or you can take the time to pull it off just a little at a time – there will be only a little pain as you pull only a little bit off – and you can wait until the stinging of that episode subsides before pulling the next part off. And while it may take a lot more time to get this stuff off of your skin – the pain is minimal and it is bearable.

Jesus doesn't want us to wait until "that day" to have all the sinful attitudes and thoughts ripped from our spirit man all at one time: I believe there are 3 reasons:

- .1. He loves us and does not want us to suffer great pain on that day
- .2. He doesn't want us to suffer the fruits of sinful attitudes and thoughts here in this life while we are waiting for that day
- .3. He doesn't want us to have less blessings in Heaven because we had less obedience here

What a loving and compassionate God he is - To put into the heart of every genuine Christian the desire to become pure - So that we will gradually and continually remove the moral impurities from our souls. It is so much less painful that way - And so that we won't have to contend with having acted according to our impure attitudes and thoughts - And so that we can have more blessings in Heaven.

So, what should we take home with us from this lesson?

Christians are God's children. We are born again, but we are not yet fully mature. There is a requirement – there is a command for all Christians. We are to live up to the family into which we have been born.

We are live up to the hope we have. We do this by daily trying to purify our lives from all immorality. Isn't it an awesome love on God's part that even allows such sinful creatures to experience his love? Isn't it a reasonable God that asks us to work toward purity? Isn't it reasonable on his part to ask us to work toward being ready to become "like him?"

It is not an unreasonable command – That we should imitate God's purity in our daily lifestyles.

When we willingly sin – we are indicating to the world that we accept Satan as our Lord. Can a real Christian be at peace communicating to the world a message that says, "hey, I accept Satan as my Lord."

While we may sin, but we are sincerely trying not to sin, - And we are quick to repent when we do sin - we are indicating to the world that we reject Satan as our Lord - and we accept Jesus as our Lord.

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

The fact that someone has sinned does not tell us whether they are truly a Christian or not. It is how a person responds to having sinned that tells us whether they are truly a Christian.

Those who are not truly a Christian will express one of the world's philosophical positions on sin – such as “everyone sins” – or “it's the flesh nature, I can't help it” – “anyone would have done the same thing if they were in my shoes” - or such as this.

Those who are truly a Christian will express regret at having sinned. What's more, the true Christian will express regret when they discover - that they are having thoughts of sin – even when they have not acted on those thoughts. A true Christian will express regret when they discover they have a sinful attitude.

We want to be as much like Jesus now as we can be. The hope is that we will be like Christ. When Christ returns we will see him as he really is. God has promised this and he will do it. It will happen but it is in the future. There is no doubt that we will share in that life. The Lord has already given it to us.

We shall live with him and that life will never end. We know that one day the Lord will change us. This should have an effect on us now. Each person who has this hope will turn from sin. All who have this hope in Christ will want to be more like him now.

As he is clean and holy, so genuine Christians will want to be like him. How Jesus lived is how we should live. Those who hope in him want to live like this.

When I look at the inner me – Do I see me as feeling any pain or sorrow when I act in a sinful way?

Do I see me as feeling sorrow or true regret even at having sinful thoughts?

Does the inner me have any discomfort when I discover I have a sinful attitude?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 19 – Work Toward Purity

(this page for additional notes)

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

In previous lessons – as we have looked into this letter we call 1st John. We have been encouraged to make sure there are outward indications - show that we are genuine Christians on the inside. We have been encouraged to walk toward purity. Some are probably thinking “there is just too much being said about sin.” But this letter has a little more to say about sin – so let's look at a few more things regarding sin that we should take home with us.

Read 1 John 3:4 and make notes:

We are all weak – at least in some area of life. We all sometimes fail and do wrong things. Those who have their hope in Jesus will not continue to live with sin.

Sin by its very nature is against God. Some people don't consider their sins to be all that bad. To them some sins are of little importance. But the Holy Spirit, speaking through John in this letter makes it clear that all sins are wrong and they are bad.

Some people claim to be a Christian, and yet continue to live with sin as part of a daily lifestyle. They choose to do what is wrong. They don't see the necessity or importance of obeying God.

Read 1 John 3:5 and make notes:

Jesus came to take away our sin. That is part of the gospel message that we received. We know that he is God - And we know that he was born as a man. We know that he lived on earth. He came to take away our sins. We know God punished Jesus for all our sins. He took all of our sins from us. Jesus had no sin of his own. There was no sin in his nature as God or man. He did not do anything that was wrong.

He always did what God wanted. He was perfect and so he was able to take our sins to himself.

Read 1 John 3:6 and make notes:

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

We should not continue to sin. There was no sin in Christ until He took our sins upon himself. Therefore, those who live with him should try to live without sin. Genuine Christians do not willfully continue to sin. Our sin was the reason why Jesus died. This verse does not mean that Christians cannot sin.

Believers can sin and sometimes we do sin. But we should not sin as a continuing part of our lifestyle. The Lord has given us the strength to refuse sin. So for us sin cannot be the way that we usually live. Those who continue to sin have not seen Jesus. They do not understand what he has done. They do not believe the gospel. They do not belong to him.

So, why do we sin? Why is it that we fall into the same traps over and over again? Why is it that we believe the same lies long after they have been exposed as lies? Why is it that we make a habit of doing wrong – even when we know it is wrong?

Apparent reasons might look like:

For some it is because we have never stepped back and looked at the lasting consequences of sin.

For some it is that sin tastes so good – even if it is only for a moment.

For some it is that Satan has done such a good job of packaging the poison that we drink it because of the bright shiny label?

For some it is that the beginning of the story is so alluring, so appealing, so sensual, so seductive.

Do we ever stop and ask ourselves what our reason is? Why Do We Sin? Basically – for everyone who continues to live with sin as a usual part of their daily life. There is only one reason! We do not see sin as God sees Sin!

Like alcoholics or drug users - who enjoy the short-term pleasure but cannot – or refuse to - see the long-term damage they are doing. If we really want to be the children of God, we have to be insane to keep sinning! Believers have been told that Sin separates us from God – and yet we sin!!

The Old Testament and those who study and try to live by the Old Testament – have a realistic view of sin. “To What may the sinner be compared? To the one who beholds open handcuffs and places his hands into them.” (The Jerusalem Talmud)

We simply don't see sin the way God sees sin !

Read Proverbs 5:1-5 and make notes:

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

God sees sin as a Seductress. Sin promises satisfaction and fulfillment- But outward looks can be very deceiving. And when it comes to Sin – It is never what it appears.

Read Proverbs 23:29-32 and make notes:

God also sees Sin as a Mocker ! The very image of joy and celebration, as wine sparkles in the cup. But look again - look closely and you will see: grown men lying in their own vomit, dignified women sleeping with crude strangers, carpets stained with blood from a fistfight over nothing - the sparkling has turned out to have fangs!

But that is just the beginning – look again in a few months or years: jobs have been lost, marriages torn apart, children beaten by fathers in a drunken rage. Sin – like intoxicating substances - is a thief and murderer.

Just ask the husband who lost the wife of his dreams to a vehicle swinging out of control because the driver had to have one more drink before he went home. That is why the Word never tires of giving us warnings and showing us how to avoid temptation – and how to keep from allowing sin to be a part of our daily life.

If we play with fire, we WILL be burned. If we play with sin, we WILL be destroyed. It's NEVER worth it in the end!

The Word of God has given us the antidote! There are truths that can save lives from destruction. There are principles that can snatch souls from Hell's grasp. But the Truths of God's Word Must be applied to our lives.

People have burned to death in sight of a fire escape - People have died from a snake bite with the antivenin on a shelf - People have drowned within reach of a life preserver. We must pursue and make use of the way of escape.

I would like to share with you 20 Reasons Not To Sin:

Read Proverbs 27:20 and make notes:

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

.1. Sin Does Not Satisfy

Sin can bring real pleasure – it can feel great to sin. And that’s one reason sin is so powerful and addictive. But no sin has no lasting satisfaction. Sin leaves us with an empty, unclean, ungratified, hollow, discontent feeling. We need to face the truth – the promises made by sin are all fantasy! Sin will never satisfy!

Read Proverbs 5:22 and make notes:

.2. Sin Leads to More Sin

When we sin, we tie ourselves up. Sin calls out to people and tells us to “get free” of our religious guidelines – And when we respond to this invitation to become free. We discover a great deception has taken place. Instead of the sinners being free and the believers being “in bondage” - it’s really the reverse!

Only those in Christ Jesus are really free. The more people move away from the guidelines of God’s Word – the more bondage they find themselves into. But Sin doesn’t tell people this part – it’s like this is part of a great secret sin keeps to itself. Sin says, “You’re really struggling with lust - if you would just watch that porno flick, you would get the release you need.” But the only thing watching that filth will produce is a desire and a need to watch another unclean movie.

When people give into invitations like this from sin – it’s like feeding a fire – it burns bigger and hotter. Every time we sin, it becomes harder for us to resist and easier to yield.

.3. Sin Leads to Worse Sins

It’s bad enough that sin leads to more sin, but sin also drags the human character and will DOWN – sin never lifts us UP. The child abuser and serial killer were not born that way! Sin took them step by step to the place where they are – Sin took them step by step to the person they have become.

Sexual immorality provides one of the most vivid illustrations of the slippery slope of sin! After awhile, “normal” pornography or sexual activity become too “soft” or boring. The flesh cries out for the next step downward, and then the conscience becomes seared.

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

Read Proverbs 14:12 and make notes:

.4. Sin is treacherous!

It is so common today to hear people say things like, “But I’m not that bad!” Everyone has a stopping point beyond which they will not go, like people who will watch “R-rated” movies but not “X-rated” ones. The problem is that sin constantly works to adjust our stopping point! We once thought some of the things we are now doing were pretty bad – But now we congratulate ourselves because that is ALL we do! We act so proud of ourselves because we have limited ourselves here and don’t go any further. How long will it be before we you take another downward fall?

.5. Sin Enslaves

No one wants to be a slave! Slaves do the will of another, they have no future and no hope – unless someone can liberate them! This is one of the great reasons not to play games with sin – sin shackles! When we touch it, it holds fast like glue and swallows like quicksand – it’s easy to step into but hard to step out of it!

Before we got entangled with a specific sin, we were free - now we are under it’s power! Ask the alcoholic or the drug addict, - ask the compulsive gambler, - ask the child abuser! We need to Walk away from sin before sin overtakes us and our life.

.6. Sin Degrades and Humiliates

Think about any public figure who has worked for years to gain respect and establish a solid reputation. What happens when they commit gross sin and are found out? Everything changes! We now look at that person differently – because sin stains!!

A football player who is a homosexual ... a gifted author who is a wife beater ... an anointed preacher who is addicted to pornography ... a Nobel Prize winner caught soliciting boys for sex ... a President whose sordid activities are aired before the world. The shameful reproach is never worth the sinful release!

Satan loves to mock the human race. He loves to see men and women, the pinnacle of God’s creation, putting needles in their arms, committing sodomy, shooting and stabbing each other, begging for money for another drink, dying of sexually transmitted diseases, tossing and turning in their guilt, wallowing in shame, drowning in embarrassment.

The devil loves to humiliate us! But Jesus loves to shower us with glory and honor!

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

Read Nehemiah 8:10 and make notes:

.7. Sin Steals Joy

Never underestimate the importance of JOY! Sin bursts the bubble of joy and breaks communion with God. And that takes away our strength. Sin steals something that all the pleasure and money in the world can't buy. What fleshly pleasure is worth so much loss?

.8. Sin Steals Our Confidence Before God

Sin steals all purity and innocence, making us uneasy with people and uncomfortable with God. A man who just betrayed his best friend for the sake of a business deal and now can't look him in the eye ... the new believer who got drunk last night and came to church today drained of enthusiasm ... the person who has no power to rebuke the devil's attack because months of perverse TV shows have drained their authority. The devil doesn't flee from someone who is participating in sin – no matter how loud they pray! But the good news is that we CAN live in such a way that we have confidence before God.

.9. The Wages of Sin is Death

There is only one way in which sin is faithful – its reward is always death. Unfortunately, sin never shares this secret with us! Instead, sin promises riches, fame, pleasure, fulfillment and power. And while we may experience some of these along the way, they are only fleeting, lasting at best just a short time. And then the real payday comes, and the results are always the same – DEATH, both natural and spiritual.

Sin always kills something in us when we participate with it. Sin assaults our sensitivity, trashes our conscience, mauls our willpower, and defiles our soul. Every time we sin, something in us dies – right now. Then, at the end of the road, sin pays up with eternal death.

.10. God Will Punish Sinners (in this world and the world to come)

Sin is not only rewarded by God's "passive principles" – Of sin being punished "sometime" in the future. God has established unchangeable laws of sowing and reaping, so that everything we do has consequences for better or for worse. Smoking leads to lung cancer ... alcoholism leads to cirrhosis of the liver ... promiscuity leads to STDs ... gluttony leads to heart disease ... some common sins produce - prison sentences, broken homes - sick bodies ... the current consequences alone should keep us from sin! Bbut all those pale in comparison with God's holy judgment. Who of us thinks we can stand when his gavel falls?

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

.11. Sin Hurts the Lord

Maybe the image of an angry, vengeful God doesn't mean much to us – after all, we call ourselves a Christian! Hell's flames do not scare us. But sometimes we still struggle with sin.

Maybe this will help – when we sin, we wound our Savior and spit in His face, making a mockery of His love. Can't we feel God's pain? John Bunyan wrote:

“Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love.”

Ray Boltz sings in one of his songs:

“Does He still feel the nails every time I fail? Can He hear the crowd cry ‘Crucify!’ again? Am I causing Him pain? Then I know I've got to change. I just can't bear the thought of hurting Him.”

.12. Sin Hurts the Sinner

The fact that sin hurts the Lord might help us to resist temptation when we're feeling spiritual. But what about when we're feeling natural? What about those times when spiritual thoughts don't motivate us in the least? That's when we need to remember - Sin Hurts Us Too! Sin messes everything up.

.13. Sin Hurts the Sinner's Family and Friends

Sin never stops with the sinner alone – there are always wider consequences. Parents can literally make or break their family by their lifestyle and conduct, putting them through years of grief or pointing them to the solid Rock. Teenagers can show their peers that there really is a living God, or they can live opposite of God's Word, telling their friends that their sin is more real than their God. Do we ever stop and ask ourselves: “Could my example influence someone else to backslide?” It is important for us to remember - Sin is highly infectious!

.14. Sin Brings Reproach (to the Sinner, to the Church, and to the name of the Lord)

When a Christian sins in public, it makes the Church as a whole look bad, just like when a fanatical religious person blows himself up to kill others, he makes that religion as a whole look monstrous. Our foolishness, our compromise, our hypocrisy, our worldliness, and our sin - makes the Church look bad. Our sin makes JESUS look bad too!

Today, because of some of His followers, because of sins by people calling themselves Christians - Christianity has come to be associated with sex scandals, greed, etc. Jesus lived a sin-free life on this earth, and we dirty His perfect reputation by our sin.

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19 and make notes:

Read Hebrews 10:28-29 and make notes:

.15. Sin Makes Light of the Blood of Jesus

When we give in to sin, we willfully engage in the very things that cost Jesus His life. How can we betray that blood? What a slap in God's face! There is a terrible war raging every single hour of every day, with the forces of darkness assaulting all that is good. Demons delight in causing pain ... They just love to hear the terrified screams of a child being abused ... they rejoice to see the tears at the funeral of a young boy accidentally killed in a gang shooting. At this very moment, servants of Satan are urging on a prison guard who is torturing one of our brothers or sisters, - imprisoned for the cause of Christ. At this very moment, Satan's helpers are birthing another religion, designed to take more souls to hell. At this very moment, the workers of Satan are seeking to afflict someone with depression, a terminal illness, or a hideous addiction. And when we sin, we have literally joined forces with Hell and have become accomplices of the Devil !

Every day, the world pulses – and even throbs - with seductive power, using every possible means to turn people's attention away from the Lord. When we sin, we help to fuel the fire of ungodliness. Demons call to us and we heed their call ... they invite us to party with them and we accept their invitation. As we become friends with the world – we become enemies of God!

Read Matthew 12:30 and make notes:

.16. Sin Sets the Sinner Against God,

But also against the Church, Holiness, Life, Blessing and Victory. There is NO NEUTRALITY when it comes to spiritual things! We not only "Sin Against" God, but we "Set Ourselves Against" Him. We are making life harder for our fellow believers! Even our SECRET sins can have public consequences. Remember the account of Achan in the Old Testament? We are ONE BODY – please don't sin against us!

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

.17. Sin Drains the Anointing

The anointing of God is a precious commodity that empowers us for action and service; through it, God's kingdom is advanced. But sin can render the Anointing Ineffective as it literally poisons our whole spiritual system. No sinful pleasure, however special it may be, can possibly be worth losing the anointing. For a while, it appears that we can mess up and minister at the same time; but gradually, the pollution drives the Holy Spirit away.

Worst of all, by destroying the anointing on one person's life, hundreds – even thousands – who would have been blessed will have to go without being blessed. Please be careful – that as Christians – we do not squander our anointing !

.18. Sin Steals Time

Stolen goods can be replaced, broken relationships can be restored, but wasted time can never be regained – Even In Eternity! And sin steals our time!

First, there is the time it actually takes to sin! We could have been doing something for God, - We could have been spending time with our family, we could have been working on one of those projects we just can't get finished. ANY other use of our time would have been better! And sometimes the consequences of our sin last for months or years!

Second, there is the time it takes to get our heart right with God again. Even though it's time spent with the Lord, it's still wasted since all we are doing is regaining lost ground (i.e. a wrong turn).

Third, there is the time lost battling that same sin in the future, since sin is highly addictive and dangerously habit-forming. Instead of walking victoriously, we are now bogged down with temptation. In looking back after such an episode, how often have we asked ourselves "Was it worth it?"

Read Matthew 18:6 and make notes:

.19. Sin Has Eternal Consequences

Our sin affects people that admire us or look to us as a role model – Our sin can seriously affect their relationship with Jesus. The effects of our sin can last forever – in life of another person – who imparts it into another - And they into another – and they another – and so on!

1 John – 20 – Why Avoid Sin

Read Numbers 32:23 and make notes:

Read 1 Timothy 5:24 and make notes:

Read Ecclesiastes 12:14 and make notes:

.20. Our Sin Will Always Find Us Out

In God's universe, nobody really gets away with anything! If we are just playing games, only asking for forgiveness so we can go and sin again, If we are deceiving ourselves into thinking that our sin is not so bad, or if we are thinking that God would never punish us. Remember - our sin will chase us and bring us down! Does it really make any sense at all to sin?

These 20 reasons say NO ! Many ministers have used this quotation – I don't know who said it first, but it is so very true:

“Sin will keep you longer than you intended to stay,
take you further than you intended to go,
and cost you more than you intended to spend.”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 21 – Reflect God's Righteousness

The incompatibility of being a Christian and continuing in sin has been clearly expressed in this letter. It is difficult to imagine anyone having read this letter would be able to miss it. Because it is repeated and re-stated in this letter.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to say it more than once in this letter – because people then and people today seem to have a hard time “getting the message.” So, let’s continue looking into this little but potent letter we call 1st John.

Read 1 John 3:7 and make notes:

A righteous person does the right things. Some people may say that they are righteous. But they still do what is not good. Don’t believe them when they claim to be righteous but continue in sin. A righteous person will do what is good and right. Christians should be righteous like Christ. Jesus is the pattern for us to follow. And He also helps us to do what is right.

It was true in John’s day – and it certainly is true today - there are people who proclaim that they are a “righteous” person and yet we see them doing things that are not righteous things. Please don’t be fooled by such people – don’t be led astray by them and their false teachings.

The person who does what is right is considered righteous. It isn’t necessarily the person who calls themselves righteous that is in fact righteous. The person who lives their life the way Jesus lived his life – they are the ones God considers righteous.

Read 1 John 3:8 and make notes:

The devil wants people to sin. The devil is the origin of the sin nature. The person whose pattern of life is to do sin has that same nature as the devil. The person who continues to sin is like a child of the devil. They show the same nature as the devil.

In this letter sin has been talked about in terms of rebellion against God. In this verse, this is hit upon again by stating that the devil is the originator of sin. The phrase, “has been sinning from the beginning” – does not mean that the devil has been sinning from the beginning of creation.

The devil started sin – he was the originator of sin. So the devil has been sinning since the beginning of sin – because he started it! And we are told that the sinning of the devil is the main reason Jesus came to earth in a human body.

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Jesus came to “destroy the devil’s work.” What is the devil’s work – it is sin. What did Jesus come to do – to destroy sin. When we continue to sin – we are working against the work of Jesus. Jesus came to destroy sin – when we continue to sin – we are working to make sure that sin is not destroyed – and to ensure that sin does continue.

It is important for Christians to understand that people are not neutral in this righteousness and sin issue. We are either doing the things that are right or we are doing the things that are wrong. We are either working toward the things that Jesus works for – or we are working toward the things that the devil works for.

This is why Jesus was able to say “if you are not with me” - “then you are against me.” The person who consistently does not do what is right does not belong to God – and can never be considered righteous as long as they continue to do wrong willingly and intentionally.

Read 1 John 3:9 and make notes:

Seed – denotes something that is not the parent but it is something that if allowed to grow and to mature will become something “LIKE” the parent. When we become Christians, God gives a new life to us – we become a new person. We become a person with the seed of righteousness within us.

The life that God gives cannot sin. That is because this life is from God. And it is of his nature. God’s nature is opposed to sin. That is why the person born of God will not continue to sin. This is especially true if we allow God’s seed to grow within us and to mature. The people who have been born of God – the people who have the Holy Spirit in them - These people cannot willfully and knowingly continue in sin!

When we are first born again – we probably don’t realize everything that is sin. So, in our ignorance, we may in fact continue to commit some sins for a while. But the person who is truly saved, has been given the Holy Spirit to help us understand all that Jesus taught.

This means that we are continually coming to know more and more of what is right and to recognize more of what is wrong. As soon as the truly saved person comes to know that something is wrong – they eagerly give it up. Once a genuine Christians comes to the knowledge that a certain thing is sin – we simply cannot go on doing that thing. The reason this is so – is that we have been born of God.

It is simple actually - The saved person has experienced “divine birth” – and has become a child of God. As a result of this “divine birth” we now have at least some of God’s character. And there is no part of God’s character that is compatible with sin. So, while each saved person may in fact receive a different part of God’s character – None of us will find any compatibility with our new life and any sin.

1 John – 21 – Reflect God's Righteousness

Read 1 John 3:10 and make notes:

We should be able to tell who are Christians. The test is how we live. Those who are born of God will do the right things. Those who are of the devil will continue to sin. A person who does not try to do what is right – simply is not a child of God.

The follow-up statement here is very interesting. Not only is the person who does not try to do the right thing not a child of God - But neither is the person who does not love his fellow man. We may talk more about this in a later message, but let me summarize it here.

The Bible tells us that God is Love. So, if we are not “loving” – it would be hard to make a convincing argument that we are doing what is right. If we are not living out our life in love – and God is love – then we are not living out our life in God – are we?

Many law enforcement patrol officers carry with them what is called a “field test” kit. If they come across a person who has a substance that is suspicious – they can pull out their field test kit and sample a small amount of the substance. If their field test kit indicates it is probably not an illegal drug – they give it back to the person and let them to go. But if their field test kit indicates this stuff is likely to be one of the illegal drugs – they arrest the person and turn the “substance” over to the lab for a more accurate test.

Verse 10 provides us with a “field test” to use on ourselves and others – regarding righteousness. When someone claims to be a righteous person – whether it is we who are making the claim about ourselves – or if it is another person we have met - we can use v10 to determine the probability of truthfulness of this claim.

The field test kit carried by law enforcement personnel is fairly accurate – and if it says “this is an illegal drug” – it almost always proves to be true when tested by the lab. But there are a few variables that can enter the situation that will cause the indication to be incorrect. So people are not convicted only on the results of the field test.

It's kind of like that with v10 – We need to be careful that we don't execute someone because we used v10 and determined that they are not righteous – When reviewed by a more accurate authority – they may be innocent.

We look at someone's lifestyle who claims to be a righteous person and then we determine this person is “ADR” – “Ain't Doing Right” - but what we consider to be “right” is affected by what we know - and it is affected by our ability to understand what we know - and it is affected by what we think we know about how they live their life.

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It could be that there is something else in their life – or lifestyle - that we don't know. And if we did know that “other thing” – then we would see them differently. So, when we use v10 – and someone appears “ADR” to us – let's take it to the more accurate authority – God – at least before we execute anyone.

In our contemporary world where we are told it is so hard to know who is saved and who isn't. The conclusion is simple – in light of all that has been said. It IS possible to distinguish between those who are truly the children of God and those who only claim to be children of God. “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are.”

What are we to take home with us?

We can never be fully righteous in the same way that God is righteous – through and through. However, there must be some similarity of God's righteousness found in us. A mirror provides a reflection of the person who is before the mirror.

The truth is that there is various qualities of mirrors. Most mirrors have some level of defect within them. So the image the mirror reflects back is only as accurate as the quality of the mirror. Many of us have had the opportunity to stand in front of a mirror that makes us look very different from reality.

Like the mirror that makes our head look much wider and the rest of our body look much narrower than we really are. Like the mirror that makes us look much taller or much shorter than we are in reality.

There are mirrors that give only a blurred reflection – and then there are mirrors that give a very crisp clear reflection. There is the mirror that shows what looks like a clear reflection of our face and it looks smooth. And then we go to another mirror and it shows all the little pores and some little imperfections.

The better the quality of the mirror – the more accurate the reflection is. That's a pretty good analogy of how we should assess our daily walk as a Christian.

Okay, we claim to be righteous – the truth is that we don't have any righteousness of our own. We only reflect the righteousness of God. So, how good of a reflection of God's righteousness are we giving to the world around us?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

Earlier in this letter the Holy Spirit speaking through John – has established that the “children of God” are characterized by righteousness and freedom from sin. He now says that the children of God are to be people who love one another. And the Holy Spirit doesn’t just leave it at a simple statement – He takes the time to make sure we understand “what kind of love” He is talking about. He gives us a negative illustration – indicating the wrong kind of emotions. And He gives us a positive illustration – indicating the right kind of affection.

Read 1 John 3:11 and make notes:

Earlier, we were told in this letter – that we have heard from the beginning that God is light. Now we are being reminded that we have also heard from the beginning that we should love one another. This is not a “new message” – it’s been part of the message as long as there has been a message. Jesus said in John 13 – the command I give you is to “Love One Another.” The simple fact that the Holy Spirit felt it necessary to remind these early Believers of this part of the message that has been heard from the beginning – tells us that it was necessary for the early Christians to be reminded of this facet of being a Christian.

So, it should not take up much of our time to be convinced that we need to be reminded of this as well. There is something about our fleshly nature that draws us toward being selfish and Self-centered. There is something about our fleshly nature that will lead us toward jealousy and covetousness

Christians, in every generation, have seen many begin to go down the path of fleshly nature while calling themselves Christians. And it doesn’t take long before these people calling themselves Christian – are doing things that hurt others and expressing attitudes of despising others – if not actually hating others. It is a sad commentary on humanity – but the truth is that we need to be reminded of the message that is contained with this little letter we call 1st John.

Read 1 John 3:12 and make notes:

We, who believe in God, must not be like Cain. Cain should have loved his brother. But instead, Cain murdered his brother. In contrast to Cain, we should grow in our love for other Christians. Those who hate do not belong to God. The devil has control in their lives of those who hate. Cain did not become a child of the devil because he killed his brother. Cain was first a child of the devil. And then, because of this association, he did what was evil. Being a child of the devil led him to kill his own brother.

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

Abel did as God wanted. But Cain did not do what God wanted. Abel did what was right. Cain did what was evil. And that is why Cain murdered him. Cain was jealous of Abel. The devil and his children hate those who do good things. Cain drew his inspiration and direction from Satan – who is himself the archetypal murderer. Christians are in no way to be like Cain !

Failing to love another person can ultimately lead to murdering the other person. Jesus did not say that a person who hates another person has already committed murder – But he did indicate that the penalty for hatred is the same as that for murder.

This verse is important – one reason it is important is that it explains the “why” a person murders another. The answer – “one person’s actions were evil.”

I am about to make a statement that I know will cause some to take issue – but I must say it. It is impossible for a person who is walking and living righteousness to commit murder! The only way any person can commit murder is to move into and act out of evil! It is impossible to have “jealousy” toward another person and to have “brotherly love” toward them at the same time. So, where we find jealousy – brotherly love is missing.

Cain was willing to murder his brother because his brother’s life choices made him feel negative about himself. Christ was willing to give up His life so that others would be able to live because our life choices had earned death for us

Read 1 John 3:13 and make notes:

The “world” is not referring to the earth which God created – but is referring to the people who love the things of the world. People who are not Christians often hate Christians. Christians are to the people of the world - as Abel was to Cain. If we do good things, some people will hate us just because we do good.

It is in the nature of wicked people. They hate those who do good things. John doesn’t say that the world always hates Christians. The people didn’t always hate Jesus. But Christians, like Abel, should do good works. And their good works will show how bad the evil works are. Then the people of the world may hate them.

Christians should not be surprised – let alone shocked when people of the world express hatred toward Christians. The situation has not changed since the days of Cain and Abel. One person realizes that they have not pleased God - And then they come across someone that they recognize has pleased God. Instead of this sparking a desire within them to act more like the person who has pleased God. There is something within them that encourages them to destroy that person who has pleased God.

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

It certainly would be proper to apply this to people outside Christianity desiring to destroy people who are Christians. But here is the saddest part of this message – Sometimes people who claim to be Christians – sometimes people who are active in some Christian ministry – sometimes people who are in places of leadership within some ministry. They come to realize that they – and their life choices - are not pleasing to God.

When they come across someone that has the evidence that God is pleased with them – Then, almost like some fleshly reflex – They set out to destroy this other person who is also claiming to be a Christian. And Sometimes this whole scenario plays out within the Christian arena.

Read 1 John 3:14 and make notes:

Our love shows that we are real Christians. Christians know that they have a new life. People of the world may hate them. But they are safe with the Lord.

Death is in contrast to the new life. Death is the state of all who do not know the Lord. We Christians know that we are no longer dead. Christians have come into a new life. Once we belonged to death but now we do not. The Lord has transferred us from death to life. Now we belong to him.

How do we know that this is true? Our love for each other shows that it is true. We know this because we love other Christians. Such love shows that we are God's children. We do not become Christians by our love. But love shows that we have become Christians. Those who do not love do not have this life. They remain in death.

Love is the evidence of life. But hate is the evidence of death. People who hate others belong to the evil one. This means that people who hate others belong to the realm of death. The arena of death – the kingdom of death – is NOT where God is - and it is not where God resides.

The way we can Know that we have Passed From the Realm of Death Into the Realm of Life – is when we are able to walk in love toward others instead of hatred toward others. When a person can walk in love toward another person this stands as real evidence that this person is truly a part of Gods kingdom

Read 1 John 3:15 and make notes:

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

Hate is like murder. The Lord Jesus taught that anger with no cause is the same as murder (Matthew 5:21-22). So here, the Holy Spirit says that hate is the same - in its effects - as murder. Hate is often the first step to murder.

It is common for those who hate - to go on to kill. That is what Cain did. And even if they do not kill, the attitude of mind is the same. Someone who murders does not have life with God. Those who hate have the same attitude in their mind. They do not have eternal life.

Hatred is as simple as wishing that another person was not here. Hatred is as simple as wishing that another person did not exist. Hatred is as simple as the idea that another person does not have a right to exist. Hatred is as simple as the desire to deprive another person of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Some of us may not like it that Hatred is identified so simply and clearly - But it is good that we make sure that we truly understand what Hatred is. It is important – especially in today’s society and culture – That we do not leave the concept of Hatred shrouded in some cloudy definition. Hatred – is simply incompatible with the Christian Life.

Read 1 John 3:16 and make notes:

A person who loves is not selfish. We can know what true love is like. Because we have the pattern of true love in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, ‘Nobody has greater love than the person who lays down his life for his friends’ (John 15). Because Jesus loves us, that is what he did for us. He chose to die so that we might have eternal life. In this, he shows us what love really means.

We should follow what Christ has done. We should act from that same kind of love. This kind of love is never selfish. It always does what is best for other people. So, we should be willing to give ourselves for other Christians.

And let’s just admit it - This kind of love is not natural to us. But when we are born of God, he gives us this love.

Read 1 John 3:17 and make notes:

Sometimes we Christians tend to spiritualize the messages from the Bible to the point that no one really knows what the message is. We can make the message so heavenly sounding that no one on earth can make use of it.

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

This verse kind of brings things down to earth doesn't it. If we can live in the comfort of material possessions and feel no pity toward those who have nothing – The conclusion is that we don't have the love of God within us. A person who refuses to help his brother does not show the God kind of love

An example of someone who does not show this love - is the person who has plenty of possessions, more than enough for himself. And He sees a Christian brother who does not have enough to live on. This brother really needs help. Love does not require this person to die for his brother. It only requires him to give a little of what he has. He could afford to give the help that his brother needs. But this person does not give it. This shows that He does not really love.

God loves us. It is that quality of love that God gives. God has given this love to all who belong to him. But this person does not love as God does. The love of God certainly does not remain in him. If it did, he would have helped his brother. If we are not willing to help our brother, the love of God is not in us.

Read 1 John 3:18 and make notes:

Now, having said that meeting the physical needs isn't good enough - The Holy Spirit says clearly – that we not only love with words. But our words of love **MUST BE** accompanied with actions of love. We should show our love by our actions. We should not merely say that we love. Our love must show itself in what we do.

We Christians should love each other. And We should be active in our love. We should work for the benefit of other people. And that means that we should do things rather than just talk about our love. Love that is not active - is not real love.

It is not sufficient to be doing the right actions while saying the right words. And yet having the wrong attitude. And that these Words and Actions of Love – Must be said and done in Truth !

There are 3 basic things we should take home with us from this message -

.1. Loving others is the evidence of our Christian walk and not the basis of our Christian walk.

All of us at one time were part of the kingdom of death. Some of us have moved from that kingdom into the kingdom of life. How do we know whether we have made that transition or not? Do we walk in love toward others – or do we walk in hatred toward others?

Here is something important to grasp. True Spiritual Life in Christ Does Not result from loving others! Loving Others results from True Spiritual Life in Christ! So, Loving others then is the evidence of our Christian walk and not the basis of our Christian walk.

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

.2. The Message of Love is Not that Jesus Died For Us!

After such a painful and clear picture of what Hatred is the Holy Spirit, through John, now gives us a simple a clear picture of what Love is. It was true in John's day – but it is perhaps even more true today. There are so many meanings to the word “love” in our contemporary society. To make sure that those first century Christians didn't misunderstand – and so that modern day Christians don't misunderstand - we are given a clear and succinct picture of what real love is – what it looks like – what it smells like – what it sounds like - “This is how we know what love is.”

Jesus said that there is no greater love – than for one person to lay down their life for another person. We are told if we love someone – we should be willing to lay down our lives for another person – just like Jesus was willing to lay down his life for us.

Love means being ready to do anything for another person that they may need. Love sometimes means saying “no” to my life – in order for another person to even have life. Love sometimes means saying “no” to what I want to do – in order to provide someone else the opportunity to do what they want. If we only interpret what Jesus did – as narrow as “dying for us” – then we have sorely missed the message and the lesson.

Suppose you are sitting on a pier that extends out into the ocean – you are enjoying the warm breeze – you are enjoying a beautiful horizon as the sun is setting – then someone comes running down the pier shouting they are doing this for you – they run off the pier into the ocean and drown – would you be inspired or encouraged – would you hold this person in high esteem – no, you would probably think this person is crazy.

However, suppose you have fallen into the ocean and you are having trouble staying afloat – perhaps you are not a good swimmer and you are growing tired – maybe you have come to realize that you are not going be able to make it back to the pier and your drowning is eminent – then a person jumps into the ocean and helps you make it to the pier – but in so doing, they drown as a result – and later you hear someone explain that this person who jumped in to help you – they jumped in even though they knew they were not a good swimmer - now this action might actually inspire or encourage you – because this person provided something you desperately needed – even though it cost them dearly.

The real message of Love was not that Jesus died for me – the real message of Love was that Jesus was willing to do for me what I needed. Jesus was willing to provide for me what I needed and could not provide for myself. I did deserve to die. Death was the penalty that had to be paid. Jesus did die so that I don't have to, and I don't hesitate to declare my gratitude for that. But the real message of Love is found in His Willingness to do for me what I desperately needed.

That dear friends, is the message of Love that He is desires for us to share with one another. The example Jesus Gave to us – was the example of giving to another what they need.

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

.3. Love One Another In Truth.

Here is another of those statements that may rock someone's boat. Just because we give toward meeting someone's need doesn't mean we have God's love within us! Consider a person who simply gives a check out of their abundance toward meeting the need of someone. Even though they are willing to "write the check" – if they feel no pity and no compassion toward the person in need – then there is no love of God within them.

There are many in our world – not just on some foreign shore – but right here in our local world – There are many in need of food, shelter, clothing, medicine, etc. Oh, how so many people calling themselves Christians have missed the boat - by simply devising a method – or program – to help those in need to receive the things they need - And then have no compassion or pity toward those who are in need.

Why is it that simply making sure a person has food, water, shelter, clothing, etc - is not enough? Because even if we could meet all of those material needs – we will have failed to meet the Greatest Need of all. Everyone needs to be loved! And that is what God has commissioned Believers and Followers of Christ Jesus to do.

The real instruction from God to Believers IS NOT to meet the needs of others. God has instructed us to Love One Another – And out of that Genuine Love – we WILL help meet the needs of others. But if we only give to meet needs and do not love in our heart – the ship has sailed and we are only standing on the dock.

We know we have passed from the kingdom of death - into the Kingdom of Life – when we love others in our heart. And out of that heart springs forth the giving and the speaking. Out of that heart springs forth the sacrificing if necessary to provide others with what they need.

That we can provide - Maybe it's material things – Maybe it's words of acceptance or assurance - Maybe its words of encouragement - Maybe its just sitting near them so that they are not alone. It is when whatever it is that we do – springs forth in honesty from our heart of love that we know we have passed into the Kingdom of Life.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 22 - How We Know 1

(this page for additional notes)

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

The portion of 1st John we are going to look at in this lesson is seen by some as the conclusion of what has been said earlier in the letter. It is seen by others as something of a bridge that connects 2 parts of the letter. Regardless of the way in which you may choose to see this section, one thing is very clear - this part of the letter gives us assurance that we can approach God in prayer.

Why did the readers of John's letter need to hear this kind of message? They had so much confusion as a result of the things the false teachers had been spreading around. Many of the True Believers had come to see themselves in the most condemning light, - because they were not doing all the things of the religious law – and the false teachers were really stressing some of these things. This is part of what makes this letter so relevant for our contemporary churches.

Read 1 John 3:19-20 and make notes:

In the previous section of the letter, we were told that the evidence that we have come into God's kingdom is that we love one another. Many Bible scholars agree that this "knowledge" or this "evidence" is what is being referred to by the phrase - "This then is how we know that we belong to the truth" - The truth refers to God.

Those who belong to the truth are God's people. They are of God. They are the children of God. In the original language of this text, the phrase we have translated "we know" reads more like a future tense – it reads much less like "we already know" and more like "we shall come to know." And let's not allow this to create a fog for our understanding – if we "already" knew this as an ongoing thing – then we could never find ourselves being condemned by our hearts.

Sometimes we do find our own hearts condemning us – and it is at these times that we "shall come to know" that we belong to God's kingdom – why? "Because God is greater than our hearts."

When we love each other, we belong to the truth. We know this because of the love that we have. If we belong to the truth, we can have a good conscience. This will give us confidence to come to God. When we come to God, we can have confidence that he will accept us.

We can come to him without fear. Thoughts about fear or thoughts about our faults may upset us. Our own consciences blame us when we sin. But we can be confident that God will forgive us. We know that God is greater than our consciences. God knows the worst that is in us. And he still loves us. He knows what we have done. When we confess our sins to God - He is always ready to forgive us. When God forgives us, we can have a good conscience

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

We tend to view a self-examination like being examined by an expert – after all, who knows us better than our own heart? Sometimes when we perform a self-examination - We are likely to hear something like this run through our thoughts: “how can we possibly belong to the kingdom of truth when we are the way we are?”

It may not work if we simply ask anyone who has claimed to be a Christian for a long time, because it seems there are so many who have claimed to be a Christian for years, but remain immature – and have not grown in their knowledge of God, or His Word. However, if we ask any Christian who has grown and matured in the faith, they will tell us that it is a very good thing to perform a self-examination from time to time. They may not all agree on how often we ought to do a self-examination, but they will all agree that we certainly should do so.

Sometimes, when a Believer engages in self-examination, we become alarmed at what we find in our heart, or our thoughts, or at least our attitude. This is certainly one of the opportunities Satan likes to take advantage of and begins to tell us that we don't only fall short of the glory of God, but that we probably don't even belong to God – since we have such thoughts or attitudes as this.

We may discover that we don't truly love our fellow man the way God instructs us to do so. We may discover that we don't truly have the God kind of compassion on a fellow Believer who is struggling. Or we may discover that we are not completely free from sin. Here is something to make a note of: “God understands us better than our heart knows us.”

Read 1 John 3:21 and make notes:

There is such a thing as a person who is doing wicked things – and their heart does not condemn them – these are the persons who have been turned over to a reprobate heart. This verse is not directed to such people – this verse is not directed toward unsaved people – this verse, as is this whole letter, is directed to Believers in Christ Jesus – in other words, this letter is to Christians. If we are honest – many of us can remember some time when we have been unfaithful to God, or disobedient in some way to God.

Perhaps no other person was aware of our disobedience. We can remember how difficult it was for us to come into God's presence, because our heart was telling us that we are unworthy to come before God – and even when we decided to come to God and repent we had some apprehension.

When we find our hearts condemning us – we have lost our confidence to come before God or to come into His presence. Hopefully all of us can remember times when we were pretty sure that we have been obedient to God – and can remember how easy it was to come before God and just talk with Him, and usually ask God for something.

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

When our hearts do not condemn us, we come to God with such confidence don't we? There are a great many Believers who are ready and willing to fight over "when" the rapture is going to take place. There are some Believers who admit that they don't know "when" – but they have a very real confidence that they will be included "whenever" it does take place. Their "confidence" that they belong to God trumps any lack of knowledge about the "when." Their "confidence" of belonging to God – trumps any lack of knowledge in any area. It is when we find ourselves so thoroughly submerged into "confidence in God" that we discover that even our own hearts can no longer condemn us.

To summarize this verse:

When God forgives us, he cleans us from all sin. Then our consciences should not continue to blame us. When our consciences do not blame us, we can have confidence to come to God. We have confidence that we can know God.

We can live with him now. And we trust him for our future. We know that we can come to him. We can talk with him in prayer.

Read 1 John 3:22 and make notes:

God answers our prayers because we please him. If our consciences do not accuse us, then we have confidence to come to God. We can come to God and pray to him. We receive what we ask for. God will give it because we obey him. We please him when we obey him. It is not that we earn the right to receive from him. He gives to us because he wants to.

Read 1 John 3:23 and make notes:

Some of the false teachers tried to separate Jesus from the Christ. They did not agree that Jesus the man was the Son of God. The false teachers did not love as God demands. They could not because they did not have the love of God. They had not really believed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They failed to believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

God's command is that we should love each other. This is God's command to us. We must believe in Jesus Christ AND we must love each other. These are two parts of the same command that we must obey. We must have trust and confidence in Jesus Christ. We must agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

This verse was especially important in John's day because of so many rules and regulations being demanded by the false teachers. But it is equally important today, when we listen to all the rules being required by some church groups today. "This is God's command" – "to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ" – "AND to love one another as He commanded us to do."

Read 1 John 3:24 and make notes:

When we obey God, we discover that our home is with God – when we obey God, we discover that God makes His home with us. God has given us his Spirit.

Those who live in God obey him. Those who obey God live in him. But we do not earn this unity with God. We do not receive it because of what we do. We live in God And God lives in us. We know that this is true because God has sent his Spirit to be in us.

God's Spirit IN us is the proof. The Holy Spirit helps us remain in God. AND God's Spirit helps us to obey God. His Spirit makes us able to believe AND to love.

Ask most believers what the "commands of God are" - and they will likely say some version of the Ten Commandments. But what is the "command of God"? What is it that God commands us to do? We are to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God – AND – we are to love one another.

It isn't the people who keep the Ten Commandments who live in God - Or in whom God lives. There are 2 basic reasons why this is true:

First:

A person could keep the Ten Commandments and not Believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Secondly:

No one has ever been able to keep all Ten of the Commandments !

Now, those who "obey His commands" – to believe in Jesus as the Son of God AND love one another – these are the people who "live in God" – and these are the people in whom God lives! And this is exactly how we know that He lives in us!

Jesus told us before He ascended to the Father in Heaven – when I go, I will send you the Holy Spirit – He will help you understand all that I have said to you. The Holy Spirit is the "spirit" He gave to us. It is the Holy Spirit of the Living God that will help us know that we live in God and God lives in us.

Whose word or argument will we accept over the word, over the testimony, and over the assurance of the Holy Spirit? Oh yeah, because we have received God's Spirit, we can walk in confidence.

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

There are 3 things we should take home with us:

#1. Christians Need To Train Our Hearts!

When we do what is characteristic of God and the realm of His kingdom – that is an indicator that we belong to that realm. When what is characteristic of God and His kingdom becomes a daily part of how we live out our lives – that is evidence that we belong to that realm.

Our Goal, as Christians, is to have this evidence in our daily lives. Our Heart too often operates out of justice - and simply assesses that we either did make it or that we didn't make it. And God, while being a God of justice for sure – is also a God of mercy and unimaginable understanding.

In God's magnificent and gracious and merciful understanding – He knows that often times our feeble attempts to obey Him truly do spring forth from a genuine desire to obey and while we sometimes fall miserably far from the mark, we have a sincere and true allegiance to Him.

When our hearts become so very troubled and begin to condemn us, we shall put our hearts at rest in the very presence of our God. We may not have been completely successful in our attempt to be obedient – But we at least tried to be obedient – it was our intent to be obedient – it was our desire to be obedient – and God looks at the heart and it's intent before He looks at the actual deed itself.

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul expressed some thoughts along this line – in a paraphrase he said, “I don't really care if you judge me – or if any human court judges me – why, I don't even judge myself anymore – It is the Lord who judges me – and that is what keeps my conscience clear.”

No matter how much our heart may condemn us – God still welcomes and forgives the person who seeks His forgiveness – God still cleanses the person who throws themselves upon His mercy. We can become confused about status in the kingdom of God. We can become so filled with troubling doubts. But God Knows Those Who Belong To Him! This is what we must teach our hearts.

It is the nature of everything of this world to cry out for justice (balance). Every positive seeks out a negative. Every vacuum seeks out a pressure to fill it. Water seeks its own level

Our hearts come naturally into this world as hearts of justice – We need to re-train our hearts to become hearts of love, mercy, and grace. We need to re-train our hearts to respond according to the Word of God And not according to nature.

1 John – 23 – Confident Hearts

#2. Obedient – Confident Christians Receive Answers To Prayer.

I know that there are some groups who have misused this text so much that many Believers today just want to avoid it all together. But folks, this is part of God's Word to us – Let's not avoid or deny any part of God's Word.

When we get to the place in our daily walk, that while we may still fall short in reality. Our heart's desire and intention was – and is – to be fully obedient to our Heavenly Father. We not only find that our heart no longer condemns us but we begin discovering that we actually receive the things from God that we ask of Him.

He gives us what we ask for because we “obey” AND because we “please” Him. Jesus said “you may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it.” It is important for Christians to understand this – if we are to get what we ask God for, then we must obey Him.

When we are obedient – we ask in confidence. When we are obedient – we experience a “yes” response to our prayers much more often.

#3. Christians Are To Live By The Letter Of Love And Not The Letter Of The Law.

Christians need to be much less concerned with how long some man's hair is and much more concerned about whether he believes in Jesus Christ as God's Son. Christians need to be much less concerned with which side a woman's shirt buttons on or whether the zipper is on the side – and be much more concerned about her loving others.

Christians need to be less concerned about what kind of meat someone eats – and less concerned about them eating sugar or drinking caffeine - And much more concerned that everyone we come into contact with knows that Jesus is the Son of God. And Christians need to be more concerned about having compassion of those around them.

So, how are we doing in the area of “re-training our hearts”? How are we doing in the area of seeing our prayers answered? How are we doing in the area of Living by the Letter of Love instead of the Letter of the Law?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

Imagine someone is being moved by the witness of a spirit – but the spirit that is bearing witness IS NOT the Spirit of God. Imagine someone is doing the things they do and teaching the things they teach because a spirit has inspired them to act and teach these things – but the spirit that is inspiring them IS NOT the Spirit of God.

As a minister who desires and seeks spiritual inspiration – As a minister who encourages others to desire and seek to be inspired by the spirit - I feel compelled to declare that it is of the utmost importance to know – “what spirit” is it that is providing us with our inspiration. To simply know that we are being moved and directed by spiritual inspiration is not enough.

We must know that the Spirit that is inspiring us and directing us – is the Holy Spirit of the one True God.

There are 2 spiritual entities in this world that provide inspiration and leading to people - One Spirit represents Truth – and the other spirit represents error. It is not surprising, but it is disappointing - that the world – and the people who are attached to the things of this world – have a tendency to accept and follow after the spirit of error and are quick to reject the Spirit of Truth. And this makes the message in this letter of 1st John important and relevant for us today.

Read 1 John 4:1 and make notes:

We are told to do 2 things in this verse – and then we are given the reason as to why we should do these 2 things. First, we are “not to believe every spirit.” Secondly, we are to “test the spirits.” The reason given is this: Because many false prophets are in the world.

In John’s day, many false prophets had been part of the church and then they had left the church. Just like in John’s day, today - there are other spirits, which are active in the world. These spirits speak by people such as the false teachers and false prophets. They may or may not be in the church.

We need to know the origin of what people say. We should not just believe what a person says. We need to know if it is from God or not. If it is from God, we should believe the message. If it is not from God, we must not believe that message.

We must test what a person says. His or her words may be from God’s Spirit or they have originated with some other spirit. Even if the words seem to be right, we still need to know the origin. The origin is either the Spirit of truth or the origin of these words is a spirit of error.

Many people say that they are teaching God’s message. But, are they telling the truth? We need to test what they say. They may or may not be false prophets. There are in fact many false prophets in the world. And then there are those who have simply received false teachings, And now they are teaching false teachings, because that is all they know.

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

False teachers and false prophets speak from the inspiring and directing of evil spirits. They teach what is false. They may pretend to have God’s Spirit when in fact they have an evil spirit.

Read 1 John 4:2 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit teaches the truth about Jesus. This is how we can recognize God’s Spirit. The test becomes then, what a spirit says about Christ. The Spirit from God teaches that Jesus Christ came. He came in a human body. This means that Jesus is the Son of God. He was the Son before he came to this earth.

Jesus was the Christ all through his life and his death. He is still the Lord Jesus Christ. The false prophets may well have believed that Christ came from God. But they also said Jesus was not the Christ. They denied the Christ had come as a human person. They would not agree that The Christ died.

We very often can know the origin of the teaching by this test. It shows whether a person is speaking by God’s Spirit. Every spirit - or teacher - who confesses - both with heart and voice – that Jesus Christ, who is come in the flesh, then this Spirit is of God !

Here is the foundation to the answer to our problem. When a prophet is inspired by the Holy Spirit – they will always acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Regardless of how wonderful everything else a person teaches may sound – anyone who denies that Jesus came in a fleshly body – is being inspired by a spirit other than the Holy Spirit. Anyone being inspired by the Holy Spirit will confess and testify to the true union of the divine Word – the Son of God – and the human person Jesus.

In the letter to the Corinthians we are told that no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And I trust most of us understand that this is referring to saying these words from an honest heart.

In reality a person who habitually lies and deceives can say the phrase “Jesus is Lord” with their mouth – but they don’t say it in their heart. They usually are mocking the statement in their heart as they say it with their mouth. Just like the person that tells us this product will last for ever and never need repair, when they know full well that it is going to break the first time we try to use it.

Read 1 John 4:3 and make notes:

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

Verse 2 gave the evidence from the positive side. This verse gives the evidence from the negative side. Any person who does not acknowledge that Jesus was God in the flesh – this person simply is not from God.

Evil spirits oppose the gospel message - Jesus Christ came as a man. Any spirit that does not agree with this cannot be from God. The false spirit does not agree that Jesus is the Christ.

This spirit will work by the false Christ who will come in the future (1 John 2:18). And - This spirit is already here in the world. It is working by those who oppose the gospel.

It is important to ask a few questions of a person who claims to believe in Jesus. We need to know if “their Jesus” is the “real” Jesus of the Bible.

Many believe in Jesus the prophet. Many believe in Jesus the great teacher. Many believe in Jesus the miracle worker. Some even believe in Jesus, one of several ways to God. But how many believe in Jesus as the only name given among men whereby we must be saved – for this is what the Bible says! How many believe in Jesus as the only sacrifice for our sins – for this what the Bible says! How many believe in Jesus as the only way to Heaven – because this too is what the Bible says!

It isn't enough to “believe in Jesus?” It does in deed make a difference “WHAT” we believe about Jesus - and What we Confess concerning Jesus.

There are 2 points from this message we really need to take home with us:

#1. Test the Spirit – Test the Inspiration!

Make sure you listen to teaching and preaching that clearly lines up with the Written Word of God. If the teacher you are listening to is not teaching the same thing that the Bible teaches – Then don't keep listening to them

#2. Read God's Word For Yourself.

Make a sincere effort to read the Written Word of God for yourself. We usually don't understand what we read in the Bible when we first start reading it for ourselves – but as we continue to read it, we discover that the Holy Spirit begins to explain one part of the Bible to us by using another part. And as we read it for ourselves, we become better able to determine if what a teacher or preacher, or prophet is saying – Actually lines up with the Written Word.

Dear Friends, we are to try the spirits. We are to test the “inspiration” of the teacher and the prophet. We are to test all spirits by the written word. If what a person says does not line up with the Written Word of God, then the spirit which is inspiring them and directing them – simply IS NOT God!

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

The false teachers in John's day were claiming to be acting and preaching as a result of spiritual inspiration. And they were telling the truth about having spiritual inspiration – but it was not the Holy Spirit.

Many of us have experienced someone doing something a little strange or unusual and they testify that this is the result of spiritual inspiration. It happened in John's day when this letter was written and it still happens today – it seems that human kind has not changed in several thousand years.

2000 years ago as well as today, when someone does something “different” - such as saying some words that others around them don't understand – or teaching a new doctrine. They will say this is a spiritual gift – and as such it is a sign that validates their ministry. The Holy Spirit inspired John to warn the Believers that just because someone is moved by spiritual inspiration – this does not validate their actions or teaching.

For someone to be “out of our mind” – “out of our body” – or “out of control”- DOES NOT VALIDATE our words or actions as being from God! In those days – just like today – there are demonic spirits that inspire people – and they most certainly guide those people to local churches.

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in his letter to the Corinthians and they were instructed to “try” the spirits to make sure they were from God. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. Many false teachers have gone out into the world

Just because someone is spiritually inspired does not mean that their actions or their teachings are from God. Spiritual inspiration – even though it is real – is not necessarily from God. This means that what a person says - while they are being inspired – is not to be accepted until this word is tested for Godly Validity. This means that what a person does - while they are being inspired – is not to be accepted as appropriate or right until these actions are tested for Godly Validity.

Having prayed in tongues, Nor my having prophesied something that came to pass - DOES NOT Validate anyone as being inspired by the Holy Spirit!

I confess that I never accept someone else as valid just because they babble. I never accept someone as valid just because they foretell something that is coming. I never accept someone as valid just because they seem to know things about another person that isn't humanly possible to know. Nor do I reject them on any of these.

I do not hesitate to say to you – just because you hear someone jabber away in some unintelligible sounds – do not blindly accept them as being of God. Just because someone tells you something that is to come and it in fact it does come to pass – Do not blindly accept them as being from God.

False teachers and false prophets claim spiritual inspiration – and often times do truly have spiritual inspiration. But the spirit that is inspiring them is very different from the Holy Spirit.

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

In the Old Testament – we find that some of the prophets spoke by inspiration of the Spirit of God - And other prophets did not speak by inspiration of God’s Spirit – they either spoke of their own ideas or they were inspired by the evil spirits. So when we find the devil and his demons counterfeiting the gospel message and teachings of Jesus – it is not a new tactic.

We must scrutinize and test everything that comes to us by way of personal inspiration as well as things brought to us by those claiming to be spiritually inspired. Jesus warned us to be careful of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing. Jesus said we would recognize them by their fruits.

False teachers claim to be offering grapes – but these grapes may be among thorns of dissension – or perhaps among thorns of discord – or among thorns of division. If that is the case, then these are not real grapes.

Jesus himself protested that some will say “Lord, Lord” but did not do what He said to do and Jesus clearly stated that such people do not belong to the kingdom of God (Matthew 7). So it isn’t the verbal words – it is what we say with our heart. And it is what we say with our lifestyle. Any spiritual inspiration that is truly from God will clearly and without apology – declare that Jesus Christ, the divine Word of God, – came and took on the fleshly form of a servant.

The word “confesses” does not mean only literal verbal confession – it includes the practice of confession by the daily living out a life that demonstrates the faith and love and servant type of lifestyle. Many people can be heard saying the words with their mouth – but denying that very confession by their lifestyle. The true confession that Jesus has come in the flesh is not made with words – but is made in lifestyle.

Today, it seems the great majority of Believers are validating a minister or a ministry - Based upon whether they Do Speak in Tongues – or that they Do NOT. Some validate a minister or ministry by the means or method they share communion. Some validate a minister or ministry what Titles they give to the people in Leadership – or that they don’t give titles. Some validate a ministry on the kind of Music they have – or the kind they reject. There are a number of other means used today to validate a ministry – And the reality is that not one of these “actually validates” the ministry as being of God.

These only tell us “what we like” – and we accept or reject a ministry based upon what we like. The troubling thing is that very often, what our flesh “likes” is harmful to us. The things of God and the things inspired of God our fleshly desires try to reject and keep us from them.

As Christians – we should be careful that our lifestyle does not defame the name of Jesus – and to make sure that our lifestyle does not hurt the cause of Christ. Maybe we have decided that our lifestyle isn’t hurting the reputation or cause of Christ. Let's us ask ourselves:

Is my lifestyle validating my confession ?

Is my lifestyle validating my claim to being led by the Spirit ?

If so, then we are becoming an obstacle to lost people coming to Christ Jesus for Salvation.

1 John – 24 – Test The Inspiration

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

1 John - False Teachers

Other sections of the "1 John – False Teachers:

Section 1 – 12 weeks

- 01 – Touch Jesus 1:1
- 02 – Tell About Jesus 1:2
- 03 – Fellowship With Jesus 1:3-4
- 04 – God Is Light 1:5
- 05 – Fellowship Changes Us 1:6
- 06 – Evidence of Fellowship With God 1:7
- 07 – Claiming To Be Without Sin 1:8
- 08 – Confess Our Sin 1:9
- 09 – Call God A Liar 1:10
- 10 – Everyone Can Be Forgiven 2:1-2
- 11 – Loving / Obeying God 2:3-5
- 12 – Love Others 2:6-11

Section 3 – 11 weeks

- 25 – How We Overcome 4:4-6
- 26 – Real Christians Love 4:7-12
- 27 – How We Know 2 4:13-21
- 28 – Walk In Love 5:1-3
- 29 – Be An Overcomer 5:4
- 30 - Live As An Overcomer 5:5
- 31 – Confirm Testimony 5:6-8
- 32 – God's Testimony 5:9-13
- 33 – God's Will 5:14-15
- 34 – Pray For Sinners 5:16-18
- 35 – No Idols 5:19-21

1 John - False Teachers