



1 John 2:1-8
Encouragement: 1 John
“Knowing God”

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Pray. This morning we continue in our series that we started just last week going through one of the New Testament books that we know as 1 John. It is the apostle John’s letter to a group of Christians, thought to be in modern-day Turkey, though the exact audience is not known. Authorship by John is not 100% certain, but there are a lot of internal clues that tie it to the Gospel According to John, which was almost certainly written by the apostle John. It’s highly possible that this letter was intended to be circulated among a group of churches, which if true, means it didn’t have just one specific church audience. But the audience is clearly a group of people with whom he has a relationship; he likely taught them about Jesus, discipling (mentoring/coaching) them, perhaps even he was the one to lead them to that initial place of faith in Jesus.

Sometimes, when we’re mentoring and coaching somebody, we walk a fine line between discipline and accountability kinds of language on one hand, and encouragement and loving “maternal/paternal” language on the other. Raising up children is probably the most obvious example of this. If you’ve raised kids/grandkids, or are in the process of doing that, you know that sometimes you have to discipline a child for their behavior, and maybe even in the next breath give them words of encouragement and love because they feel so bad about what they did wrong.

We see that exact same kind of thing happening in this letter. You’ll recall that last week we looked at the first chapter, which is 10 verses. So, just to refresh our memory: **In the last few verses of chapter 1, he writes quite sharply about sin and its effects upon us.** “If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth” (1:6); “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1-8); “If we claim we have not sinned [there’s a popular one today – [I’m a good person!]], we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us” (1:10). In between each of those verses is a word of encouragement about the redemption we have in Jesus., but it goes back and forth very quickly...and is a bit of a roller-coaster.

Verse 10 ended on one of the “correction” verses, with the final outcome of our pride and the claim we might make to not having sin being that his word is not in us. Jesus’ word, his teaching, his ministry, is not in us and not part of our lives when we claim Jesus but don’t live like him. So, that’s some pretty strong language – guilt-inducing, even – and that’s where we left off last week. That leads us to chapter 2, where we are this morning, where we see a strong shift in tone. We’ll read the first 8 verses of chapter 2 today (different than the bulletin, we’ll start with verse 9 next week), though we’ll start with just the **first two verses** and then read the rest in a few minutes. All of this is God’s Word to you and me this morning.

So, right off the bat, we get this phrase, “My dear children.” A more literal translation would read “my little children.” So, like a parent who realizes the force of his or her words in a disciplinary moment, who then seeks to encourage the child, the pendulum is swinging here, from a general tone of “anyone who sins, or who is audacious enough to say they don’t have sin, breaks fellowship with God and with other believers”...we go from that strong, guilt-inducing message of to “My dear children...” It’s a very paternal, loving, relational addressing of the audience.

It also gives us a clue about the person who wrote this. Not down to the level of name, email address, and social security number ☺ ...but this really could not have been written by a young person or someone who had been a disciple of Jesus for a short time. It would have been way too forced or stretched. This is the voice of someone who’s older, who’s got some life experience, and definitely some hefty experience in following Jesus.

This definitely points to someone like the apostle John as the writer; he’s the only of Jesus’ original disciples believed to have actually lived to what we might call an “old age” and died of natural causes, though the deaths of some of the disciples are not known 100% for sure. But John had the long life and the discipleship credentials, for sure. If it’s *not* John who wrote this, and if it’s *not* one of the other original disciples – and it is definitely not written by Paul because it’s not his style of writing at all – then it’s some other giant of the faith alive in the 80’s or 90’s A.D. who was an eyewitness to Jesus as the

letter claims at the very beginning, and is never mentioned in any church documents from the next couple centuries or more as a possible author. That is highly unlikely.

Anyway, the point is, this language is very caring, paternal language, coming from a seasoned disciple of Jesus, wanting to comfort the readers after reading through a fairly strongly worded section on sin. So, the problem...the bad news...is our sin that separates us from God our heavenly father and causes us to walk in the darkness; and then the remedy is given right here in these two verses: The remedy is Jesus. Three things to note about Jesus here. **First, Jesus is our “advocate.”** The Greek word is “paracletos” and we only see it here and in the Gospel of John – another link between them. It means “advocate” or “helper.” Jesus uses it in John’s gospel to speak of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our helper, he says. But here, John uses it to describe Jesus. Jesus is our helper.

Second, Jesus is the “Righteous One.” If you’re a fan of Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure as I am (anyone willing to admit it with me?), you might prefer a different translation of this, that Jesus is (surfer accent) “the righteous dude.” In plain English, it means he is the right one, the one who is right. We might wonder what that has to do with us – how does Jesus being the righteous one benefit us or have anything to do with us...and how does he help us (previous point)?

The answer is in the third thing here when we read in verse 2 that: **Third, Jesus is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins and...also for the sins of the whole world.”** As John writes in his biography of Jesus that we call the Gospel according to John, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son” (John 3:16). Jesus died for the world, to atone for the world’s sins, the sins of each and every person who ever walks, talks, breathes, and has life: Male/female, black/white, short/tall, rich/poor, overweight/underweight, athletic/uncoordinated, confident in their identity or struggling to sort that out, introvert/extrovert, musical or can’t carry a tune or remember to clap on beats two and four...**It doesn’t matter who you are: Jesus died for you.** The question is: do you believe? Do you trust? That’s how the John 3:16 verse continues, as many of you are aware: “For God so

loved the world, that he gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Here in 1 John, he’s already established this truth about believing in chapter one, with the language of “fellowship” with Jesus. He writes here in verse 2 about Jesus dying for the sins of the world, but John is clear in this letter that a relationship with Jesus is how his death actually does anything for you. A relationship with Jesus, if you have fellowship with him: that is the way his death becomes effective in your life. Let’s now finish out the passage and see where this goes (**1 John 2:3-8**).

So, verses 3-8 really just flow out of being in fellowship with Jesus, our Advocate and righteous one who died for the atonement of our sins. These are the signs in our life of knowing Jesus, of being in fellowship with him. If Jesus is the remedy to the problem of our sin, and if we trust that remedy, then these next few verses are the sign of that remedy being a reality in our life.

And: The sign is that we keep his commands. In John 14:15, Jesus himself says, “If you love me, then keep my commands” and then goes on to teach more about that. It’s a significant theme in his life. In the gospel of Matthew, at the end of the sermon on the mount, Jesus ends with “whoever hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house upon the rock.” In the story he tells about that, it’s the house that’s on the rock that withstands the storms that come. So, it’s the same principle: Put his words into practice, live out what he teaches, obey his commands...it’s all the same idea. If that’s happening, then we know we have fellowship with Jesus.

In verse 6, we get a very similar phrase as we saw three times last week, when he says “Whoever claims...” Last week, it was “if we claim” to follow Jesus, but then followed by a way we might live or something we might say that is contrary to that, and disrupts our faith. Here comes the final word on the matter using the same kind of language: “**Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did**” (**1 John 2:6**). More literally, it reads, “The one who

says he abides in him, ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.” “Walked” is a common metaphor for “living” or “to live.”

So, does your life look something like Jesus’ life? When considering that question, we often will think about the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control); or we might think of ethics and morals....or the holiness of Jesus...or unfortunately even just reduce it to being a “good person.” And for sure, those are all marks of Jesus’ life and the life of the Christian should therefore be marked by them as well. **But when you look at the whole of the Gospels, what’s the thing that Jesus spent the most time doing?**

Answer: Discipling people to follow him and be like him and equipping them to disciple others. He models it, he teaches it, he simply lives it each and every day. And I wonder if our lives are marked by *that* as well? If we’re going to walk as Jesus walked, if we’re going to follow his commands, then we’d better be discipling somebody, and preferably a few somebodies. Who are you discipling? Who are you intentionally leading into a deeper journey of faith in Jesus? It could be someone who doesn’t know Jesus at all just yet and you’re scratching the surface by sharing your faith in casual conversation...it could be someone who’s a life-long Christian as you might be and just as iron sharpens iron, you help each other grow through deep, intentional Biblical/theological conversations. So: who are you discipling?

Or maybe you’re here this morning and you are newer to the faith, don’t know much about Jesus, and you want to find out more. Maybe you’d like someone, who, like John, is a little more experienced in faith, has a relationship with Jesus and could help you understand who Jesus is. Let me just say, the *Basic Christianity* class being taught by Regan Landis after the service is exactly where you need to be. And if you’re further along in your journey of faith, maybe you want to be a part of that class and be more of a mentor in the midst of it, and maybe take someone under your wing who’s newer. I know people here who would love to have someone disciple them in what it means to follow Jesus. Or there’s Rob’s class – *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* – where you will go deeper into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and as the video said, “will transform you and the generations that

follow.” You see, being a disciple is about being a conduit of faith, not a dead-end.

Now, when Jesus speaks of keeping his commandments, or when we read about it here in 1 John, I realize that there never is a commandment that says “Thou shalt go to Discipleship classes and Sunday School.” It’s a pity he didn’t say that, because it would lend more weight to what I’m recommending you do after the worship service. ☺ Unfortunately, we tend to think of classes, or small groups, or other discipleship things (even worship services) as optional. But some kind of discipleship besides the sermon...something where you can interact with people, ask questions, and have conversation about matters of faith, is really important. I hope we will all be attending class today – from 3 years old to 103 years old – so we’d be more equipped to live like Jesus, because as John writes here in verse 6, “Whoever claims to live in him must live as he did.”

Very briefly: **John then continues in verse 7, “Dear friends....” The word here is the root word “agape” the most famous Greek word in Scripture for “love.” What he’s really saying is, “Dearly beloved...”** It’s another term of endearment and shows the relationship he has with them through their shared fellowship with Jesus. There’s kind of a riddle in the last couple verses: this “old” commandment that is also “new.” Here’s the answer to the riddle: It’s “old” in that the will of God has not changed. The message of Jesus, the salvation we receive through faith in him...that does not change.

What changes, and therefore what is new, is us, because his truth is seen in us as he puts it in verse 8. The darkness is passing, the light that is shining as we continue to walk as Jesus walked...as we walk in the light of Christ: *That* is new. And I pray it is renewed each and every day for us, so the light shines even brighter as we live for him.

So, my friends: the darkness of sin does seek to get a foothold in our lives. It’s a problem that breaks our fellowship with God that we are granted as humans, as the ones created in his image. It’s a big problem, and I hope we each have a measure of guilt over our sin. **The good news is there’s a remedy, and our guilt can drive us to the foot of the cross** (rather than

causing us to cower in the corner of life) **to receive Jesus into our lives, to have fellowship with him, to know him, so his righteousness becomes ours, and our lives look like his.** They will look like his in a variety of ways – morally and ethically, sin decreasing, fruit of the spirit increasing...all that kind of stuff...but also we will be leading others toward Jesus as Jesus did; discipling people by our everyday lives as Jesus did; and by intentionally helping them to walk in the light, as Jesus did. Let's walk as he walked, live as he lived, demonstrating that we know God, and discipling others to do the same. Let's pray...Amen.