

1 John - Continue in Fellowship

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[0 : 00] How dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it does not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and that we will be, has not yet been made known, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Thanks very much, Jonathan. Well, please keep your Bibles open in 1 John. There's notes being passed around and pens, if you'd like to take notes. You will probably notice, maybe you don't notice, but I'll tell you anyway. In the term programme, we highlight or list the various themes for each Sunday morning. Over the last couple of Sundays, we've been out of sync. Hopefully, we'll catch up.

That's simply because in preparation, I thought we'd do certain sections in certain ways, and then when it came to preparing it, I thought, no, there's far too much here. We need to shorten it, so it'll probably find its way through eventually. We'll get through to the end of 1 John. Whether it ties in with the term programme or not, I'm not sure. But nonetheless, it's good. It's good stuff. We're going to pray, and we're going to ask our Father in Heaven to help us. Let's pray.

Our Father God, we give you thanks for your gifts to us. We thank you for the gift of being able to meet like this with one another. We thank you for the gift of having your word, holding it in our very hands, your spoken word written down for people like us, so that we can know you, so that we can love you and enjoy you. We thank you for the freedom that we have to meet like this, without fear of any authorities, fear of anyone coming to stop the meeting. Father, thank you for these wonderful gifts, thanksgiving. And yet we need to ask you of more. We need to ask that you would help us by your Spirit to understand your word, that what may be familiar and what may be known to us would strike into the depths of our lives afresh, so that we come to see you in all your greatness and come to enjoy you as Father. Please help us then, we pray. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. One sports day when I was in primary school, I'm sure you can remember your sports days, being lined up with all the rest of the children for the running race. And as I ran that race, all I could hear was my father cheering from the sidelines, that's my son, that's my son, go on, keep going. It was awful embarrassing to be running along with your father shouting so loudly. But as a father, he was just simply encouraging his child to keep on going.

[4 : 48] Look at verse 28. Read it there with me. And now, dear children, continue in him.

These are the encouraging words, if you like, of the father who's on the sidelines. It's the gentle care of a pastor, cheering them on in the faith. Go on, my child. Keep on going. Continue in him. You remember 1 John, the big theme of 1 John is that we have been invited into fellowship with God, and through faith we get to enter into that fellowship.

But that fellowship, that relationship with our father is always under attack. There are those who are out there who are trying to rob us of the deep, personal, relational joy that we have with the father and with his son.

So a couple of weeks ago, you remember in verses 15 to 17, we saw that the world was opposed to us. And then in verses 18 through to 27, it was the antichrists or the false teachers trying to lead the children astray.

[6 : 13] And so we are encouraged here, verse 28. And now, dear children, continue in him. Don't get distracted by what the world has to offer you.

Don't stop and listen to false teachers. Continue in Jesus Christ. Keep on going, my child. Look to Jesus and listen to Jesus.

Keep on going. Continue in him. Now, as we continue in him, there are two great privileges, two great realities.

And if we can grasp them, they will only increase our joy and deepen our fellowship with God. As we continue with him, there are two great things that we come to understand and experience in our lives.

Here's what they are. Here's the first one. We have great confidence before our God. We have great confidence before our God.

[7 : 29] Let's read verse 28. And now, dear children, continue in him. And here's the reason we're to continue. So that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Do you get what it said? Jesus is going to appear. One day, Jesus is going to come again.

Now, how do you feel about that? The fact that the risen Jesus is going to come again. How do you feel about that? In school, I used to dread that moment when the year head would pull me to one side and say, Jonathan, the principal would like to see you in his office.

In fact, I feared the headmaster so much that I would just walk around outside hoping that with the passing of time, he would forget. Now, we might feel like that with the thought of Jesus coming again.

Because when Jesus comes again, we will face him as our judge. So how do you feel about that? Well, look at verse 28.

[8 : 57] It tells us that he will appear. That means that when he appears, it means everybody will see him. Nobody will be mistaken by the return of Jesus Christ.

Now, just as we will see him coming, he will also see us. He will see us intimately and deeper.

Everything that we've ever said, everything that we've ever thought or done will be seen by him. A record of our whole life will be put on display before him.

And of course, all the good things that we've done, all the caring words that we've ever said, all of those things will be on display too. All our proud moments.

But so will all our faults and every single one of our failures. Our deepest shameful secrets. All the skeletons in the cupboard will be revealed and unveiled.

[10 : 09] So I ask us all the question, how confident are we to stand before Jesus as the ultimate and fair judge who sees and knows every single action?

Well, the great privilege is that we can have great confidence. We can have great confidence. Let's read verse 28.

And now, dear children, continue in him so that when Jesus appears, we may be confident. We can have confidence before the judge because of what Jesus has already done for us.

Go back to chapter 2, verse 1. Here's the two great things that Jesus has done for us so that we can be confident. Chapter 2, verse 1.

My dear children, so is this father loving care. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. It's his desire that we don't fall away.

[11 : 19] But he's a realist. He knows what we're like. If anybody does sin, and we all do, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

So here's the picture of Jesus standing before the Father as our defence. He's there, as it were, reminding the Father, assuring the Father that his sin has been dealt with.

There are no more charges against this person. They are accepted and forgiven. Now, how can Jesus stand before the Father and say that about people like you and me who mess up all the time? Well, here's the second reason, verse 2. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, but not only for ours, also for the sins of the whole world.

Yes, he's our defence, but he is also our sacrifice. He's the one who has already paid the penalty for all of our sin. The past ones, the present ones, the future ones.

[12 : 25] There is nothing left to pay. Wonderfully, Jesus Christ has taken our very worst days and has dealt with them all and in its place he has given us his perfect days so that we can stand before God.

He has taken our worst days and in its place he has given us his best days so that we can stand before God.

We can have confidence. Look at chapter 4, verse 17. Chapter 4, verse 17. Here he's been speaking again about the great theme of God's love and when that love is poured into our lives he can say this, chapter 4, verse 17.

In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment.

You see, if we can be confident then, if we can be confident when we stand before God, then that means we can enjoy him today.

[13:44] today. We can enjoy him today. But it's not just confidence. We can also come before Jesus unashamed.

Go back to verse 28. He says, when he appears we can be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

You may relate to this in your own relationships but I know that I have said and I have done things towards my wife that I'm very ashamed of.

Although I've repented, although I've been forgiven, when I think about some of those things I am ashamed. ashamed. And I would be deeply embarrassed if you ever heard about some of those things.

How do you think it will be then to stand before Jesus who sees everything we've ever done, who's heard every word and knows our every thought?

[14:57] We would be deeply ashamed. An overwhelming sense of guilt as our life is flashed before us. We would just want to run away and hide and cover ourselves.

But look what verse 28 says. That's not how it's going to be. It's not how it's going to be. We will be, verse 28, unashamed before him at his coming.

Rather than run and hide, we will run into the arms of Jesus without guilt, without shame because we stand before him covered in his purity.

There is nothing to fear, nothing to hide. In fact, our shame will all be replaced with full and complete joy.

You see, if we can be unashamed then, if we can be unashamed when we stand before Jesus when he comes again, that means we can enjoy him today.

[16:02] We can enjoy him today. Now, the question I have for us all in this is, do you have this confidence? Do you have this confidence to stand before God unashamed?

And how can I be sure that this is true of me? Well, we need to look at the evidence. Let's read verse 29.

If you know that he, that is, God, is righteous, that's in his perfection, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

Sometimes people will say to me something like this, that's just what your father would do, or you just sound like your father. In other words, children naturally bear the resemblance of their parents. Because they share the same DNA, they sound like them, or they behave like them, they have the same kind of mannerisms, you just inherited it just the way it is.

[17:16] Now, those who have true fellowship with God, those who claim to be in relationship with God will also reflect the behaviour of their father in heaven.

Look at the end of verse 29, it says, everyone who does what is right, just as God is right, will or has been born of him.

Because we've been born of God, because God has brought us into fellowship with the father, because we enjoy that relationship with him, as his children, we naturally begin to bear the resemblance of the father.

It's like we share the same DNA, we begin to reflect who he is. So as we look at our lives and as other people look at our lives and they see the way that we behave, then it's giving us evidence, it's giving us proof, it's reassuring us and giving us the confidence that we can be unashamed before him when he comes.

Look at the evidence of your life. Are we reflecting the behaviour of our father? So the great privilege is that we have great confidence before our God.

[18:42] The second great privilege is this, God's children. If we continue in him, we have great assurance as God's children.

Let's read chapter 3 verse 1. How great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

Now just stop for a minute or wake up if you're sleeping and gaze at the love of the father for us. Look how it is expressed. See what has been achieved for people like you and me. Look at who we are today because of the father's love.

We are called children of God. The father has enacted his love in our lives.

[19 : 48] His seed of love if you like has been put into our lives and it has brought about something amazing. A great explanation or commentary on this very idea comes from John's Gospel.

So keep your finger in 1 John and go to John's Gospel. It's the same author. John's Gospel chapter 1 verses 12 to 13.

And here we have like a little commentary on the father's love for us that we should be children of God. So verse 12 chapter 1.

So he's speaking to those who are believers or to those who will believe. Verse 12 Yet to all who received him, that's Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

How do they become children? Read on. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

[21 : 17] God. You see, it's saying to us there, just as you and I had no say or no choice in being physically born into this world, none of us decided I'm going to be born.

That was our parents' decision. So just as that's true in a physical sense, so the Father in heaven has chosen us to become his very own children.

And that's what gives us the assurance that we are God's children. Our security that I am a child of God rests in the fact not that I love the Father, but that the Father loves me.

If it depended on my love for the Father, if it all depended on how much I love him and what I do for him, I've got no assurance.

Because my love for the Father fails far too often. There are days I don't love when I should love. There are seasons when I ignore him. But because he lavished his love on me, because he chose me, I have unshakable assurance.

[22 : 40] That's where my security rests. Be amazed that we have been loved by the Father and are called children of God.

But what does it mean to be a child of God? Well, think of a, we've done that, the Father's love, children of God.

Think of a child parent relationship. There's like two parts to it. If you have children, you may relate to it.

There's a legal side and there's a relational side. So when a child is born and the birth cert is signed, the child then, as it were, is legally a son or daughter of the parent.

That is a legal document that makes them a child of the parents. But it's so much more than just a legal issue, isn't it?

[23 : 45] It's not till the child gets home that they get to experience the privilege of being a son. It's only in the deep, personal and intimate relationship of living with the mother and father that they realise, I'm a daughter and I'm cared for and loved.

So it's not a cold, legal thing. It is a relational and loving thing. Verse 1, how great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

It's as if we have to pinch ourselves to believe it. And because we are God's children, we've been accepted by the father, we have access to the father, we become, people like you and me, become brothers and sisters with Jesus Christ.

We're treated and we're treasured as the father loves his own son. And if you don't quite believe it, look at the next little phrase, and that is what we are.

Do you ever doubt that you're a child of God? Because you don't love him enough? Well, it's because he loves you and he has made you a child and if you doubt it, that is what you are.

[25 : 15] Look at the rest of verse 3, the reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. You see, the world looking in may not understand that you're a child of God.

The world might think you're absolutely crazy to make a claim that you have this personal, intimate relationship with God the Father. They'll think you're bonkers.

But because of the Father's love, that is what you are. Don't let anybody else tell you otherwise. If your face is in Jesus, you are a child of God.

God. And it doesn't stop there. Look what else he has to say. Verse 2, Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known.

In other words, nobody has seen what it's going to be like what we are going to be. But we know that when he appears, when Jesus comes again, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

[26 : 32] As much as a parent loves their new baby son or daughter, they never want their little baby to stay as they are. They long for them to grow healthy and strong.

They want them to be nurtured and cared for so that they become everything they are meant to be as a mature adult. That is what a parent desires. And it's the same way for our father.

He desires for us as children that we would grow up and become all that we are meant to be. But this is not just an aspiration, this is a guaranteed promise.

Look again at verse 2, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. The promise is crystal clear.

This is something that God is going to do for us. We will become like Jesus. When Jesus returns, instead of condemnation, it will be transformation.

[27 : 43] transformation. Now let that filter into our minds and into our hearts. We will be transformed to be like Jesus.

You know what that means? No more sin. No more struggles. No more battles to be doing the right thing.

Just take a moment to think through that. What part of your sinful nature do you struggle with the most? What aspect do you really not like?

Or what is it about sin that gets you down most of all? temptation do you so quickly give in to?

And you long for the day where you will never fall again. Well, one day it will all be gone.

[28 : 50] You will be like Jesus in absolute purity. that is the guaranteed destination of all God's children.

Now the question is, do you have this assurance? Do you know that is your destiny? How can I be sure this is true of me?

Well, we need to look at the evidence. look at verse 3. Everyone who has this hope, everyone who has this longing, everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as God is pure.

Because of who I am, I am a child of God. because of what I will be, I will be transformed to be like Jesus. Because of all that God has worked in me, I will seek to live as a child of God.

I will seek to become more like Jesus. Now if that is your desire, if your longing is to be more like him, then that evidence is there to say you have assurance as a child of God.

[30 : 21] you see the true children of God long to be more like Jesus. If you have no inclination, if you have no thought, if you have no desire to be looking at Jesus and saying I want to be more like him, if that never crosses your mind, if it's never in your prayer life, then you have to ask, am I a child of God?

Because the true children of God will long to be more like Jesus. Go back to chapter 1 verse 8.

Here we see the evidence that is there for those who are true children.

Chapter 1 verse 8, if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. So if we don't care about our lives, we don't care what we look like or how we behave or whether we're like Jesus, the truth isn't in us.

But, verse 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

It's the same idea as chapter 3 verse 3, everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself. It's a life of confession, a life of ongoing repentance, a desire and an asking of God for real heart change.

[31 : 59] Change me Father, to be more like your son. And if that is our prayer, that is the evidence that we are God's children.

Lord, amen. Amen. Look at chapter 2, verse 28. And now, dear children, continue in him.

Keep on going, my child. Keep going in the faith. Know the confidence that we can have in meeting Jesus. know the assurance that we will one day be like Jesus.

Continue in him. Keep on going. And it will increase your joy. And it will deepen your fellowship with God.

We have confidence. And we have assurance. Keep going, my children. Keep going. Let's pray..

[33 : 10] Oh, hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

Hmm. Hmm. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the truth that it reminds us of. The deep personal relationship that we can have with Father and Son. It's our desire not only to enjoy you, but that we also become more like you.

So gently by your spirit, show us the things in our lives we need to put right. Teach us to come in repentance each day, to know the joy of forgiveness afresh, and to know that deep relationship that we can have as children of God, confident and assured.

[34 : 35] Father, may we all know that in its deepest sense. And we pray that we will continue in you until you come again.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together. When I was lost, you came and rescued me.

And there's one of the verses goes like this. Amen. Women alone. Jen, it was, we're going to just pass. Aren't we lost people with that, but as they ■ onto this something that we can experience?

When do we dream of Baba Raffo, and Ken Macprend's going into your life, are we going to ■■.

They've never felt like it was going to pass. Usually they've never π but darkness is the few of us, but that art is the of a ■ about Salas.