

1 John - Growing In Our Fellowship

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 March 2015

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] I'm going to come and read those now, thanks. The first reading is in John chapter 8, which is on page 1074 of the Church Bibles.

So John chapter 8, starting in verse 42. Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I'm here.

I have not come on my own, but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Yet because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?

[1 : 28] He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God. The next reading is in 1 John chapter 3, which is on 1, 2, 2, 6 of the church Bibles there.

1 John chapter 3, starting in verse 4. Everyone who sins breaks the law.

In fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning.

No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

[2 : 48] No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

Thanks very much, Kirsty.

So please keep your Bibles open there in 1 John as we continue in our studies of this letter. And as you are doing that, also there are pens, pencils and notes as well.

If you would like to take notes, just put up your hand and you can grab a pencil and some notes there as well. Let me hear in 1 John. Hello?

[3 : 52] Hello? Yes. Thanks very much, Noreen.

Well, let's pray and let's ask for God's help as we look at this. Father, we recognize there are many, many voices that speak into our lives.

But ultimately, we want to hear your voice. We want to hear your words spoken to us. So as we look at your word together, your word which is written here before us, preserved for us so that we may know you and understand you, we pray that you would speak by your spirit into our lives to help us grow in our fellowship with you.

Teach us the right attitude and the right approach that we should have as we seek to walk with you. Father, help us to hear you.

And may your words change us. We pray this for a closer walk with you, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[5 : 52] Amen. Well, I want to start this morning by giving you some very helpful advice. Don't worry about declaring your full income to the taxman.

Nobody does that. Go and celebrate with your mates. Have a few drinks. Getting drunk once in a while can't be harmful.

Leave work early on Fridays. It's not a big problem. Even your boss does that. No need to be completely honest.

A little white lie can't hurt anyone. Have a look at that X-rated video. It's just natural.

Everybody does. Forget the speed limit. If you don't, you're just going to be late. Join in the gossip about your work colleague.

[7 : 01] They only say the same things about you. You see, I think we all just need to relax a little bit. Don't take our behaviour so seriously.

It's really not such a big deal. What harm is there in a few little sins? After all, none of us are perfect, are we?

Have a look at verse 7. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.

You see, there are those who do try to undermine the seriousness of sin. We met the same warning back in chapter 2.

Do you remember what it says? Chapter 2, verse 26. He says the same thing. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

[8 : 04] In chapter 2, people were saying, it doesn't matter what you believe. You can believe what you like about Jesus. It really doesn't matter.

Now in chapter 3, they are saying, it doesn't matter how you behave. What harm is there in a few little sins? After all, nobody is perfect.

But the point is, sin is serious. Look at chapter 3, verse 4. Everyone who sins breaks the law.

In fact, if you are somebody here this morning, and you claim to have fellowship with God, there's actually no room for any sin in our life.

Look at verse 6. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. Or look at verse 9.

[9 : 09] No one who is born of God will continue to sin. Is that you? You see, sin is serious.

It breaks and damages our fellowship with God. It robs us of that deep relational joy that we have with the Father and with the Son. And that's why he is so clear in saying, verse 7, Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.

Don't let anyone say to you, behaviour doesn't matter. In fact, if we are to grow in our fellowship with God, we've got to have two things in place.

We have to have a right attitude to sin, and we are to have a right approach to sin. So let's have a look at these together. The first is, we've got to have a right attitude to sin.

Now under this, we've got three small headings. Here's the first one. What sin is. Verse 4. Everyone who sins breaks the law.

[10 : 22] In fact, sin is lawlessness. So sin is not just about breaking the law of the land. It's not just about breaking the speed limit.

It's not just about breaking the law of God. He says it's lawlessness. That means it's not so much an action we do, but it's an attitude that we have.

It's not so much an action we do, but an attitude we have. Lawlessness means open rebellion and opposition to God and his ways.

In other words, it's an attitude of our hearts. Maybe you've seen them for real, or maybe it's just been on the television.

But when you see an iceberg floating in the sea, you only get to see about one third of the actual iceberg. The other two thirds are lurking, unseen, below the water.

[11 : 27] And that's a little bit like our sin. So the wrong things we do and say and think are just what we see on the surface. They're just the tip of the iceberg.

But they reflect something much bigger and greater that lies beneath. Sin is an attitude deep down in our hearts that is opposed to God.

So instead of God making the rules, I become the rule maker. Instead of listening to what God wants, I in turn decide what God wants.

Sin is an attitude of the heart. And if sin is in opposition to God, then we can't at the same time enjoy fellowship with God.

If we're flirting with sin and messing with sin, then enjoying God at the same time is incompatible. You can't have both.

[12 : 28] You can't have a life of sin and at the same time enjoy God. That's what sin is. And that's why it's serious. But thankfully God has done something about it so that we can enjoy him.

Number two, what Jesus has done. Look at verse five. But you know that he, that Jesus appeared, so that he might take away our sins.

So here's the primary reason why Jesus came as the God-man. He didn't come to make people well. He didn't come to make people better.

That's not the primary reason. And the primary reason Jesus came was to deal with the problem of our sin. Look at verse five. He came to take away our sins.

Literally, that means he removes the consequences of our sin from us. He pays the penalty for us. And to help us understand that, we've got a good little picture of it in chapter two, verse two.

[13:38] Just have a look back there at chapter two, verse two. This helps us to understand what it means that he takes away our sins.

Verse two of chapter two. He, that is Jesus, is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now we're going to get very technical here. Okay? You've probably got a little letter beside one of the words there at the end of chapter two.

And if you look at the bottom of the page, you'll see a little note where it's got two. So you're following me at the bottom of the page of your Bible.

You've got another little note beside verse two. And here's what it says. So here's a different way of reading that verse. And it says this. He, that's Jesus, is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins.

[14:51] So do you see what's happening when Jesus dies? The wrath of God is turned away from us, and it is turned towards Jesus.

The judgment that was placed on us has now been removed and it has been taken away by Jesus and it falls on Jesus.

But how can Jesus take away my sin and your sin? What qualifies him to do that? Well, go back to chapter three, verse five. It tells us, you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins and in him is no sin.

Jesus was perfectly pure. He was faultless in his words and deeds. Morally, he did not fail. He never got things wrong.

And being sinless, he did something spectacular for us. He takes my sin from me and he puts it on himself.

[16:05] And he puts himself where we deserve to be and he is treated as we deserve to be. So Jesus pays the penalty for our lawlessness.

And he did this so that we could be in right fellowship with God. The sin has been taken away so that we can live in right relationship with God.

That's to have a right attitude towards sin. Sin is an attitude of the heart. It's deep down. It needs to be dealt with. And Jesus has dealt with it. Now, I know we know these things.

But they serve as a foundation for what follows next. How we should live. Because if we understand what sin is and if we understand what Jesus has done, then it shapes my attitude towards sin.

Have a look at verse 6. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. Now, I don't know about you, but that is one of the most troubling verses in the Bible.

[17:19] Because I read that and I go, yes, I'm a Christian, but then it says, no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. And my problem is I keep on sinning. Or am I the only one?

So what is it? It seems a bit of a contradiction to what was read earlier a few weeks ago. Have a look at chapter 1, verse 8. Chapter 1, verse 8.

As a reminder of what we read, chapter 1, verse 8 says, If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Or look at verse 10. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. So, you know, we're only fooling ourselves if we say we never sin.

We're living a lie. So what does it mean when it says in chapter 3, verse 6, no one who lives in him keeps on sinning?

[18:27] What is it? Do we keep sinning? Or are we not meant to sin? Well, here's what I think it is. I think it means we now have a new attitude to sin.

Rather than tolerate sin, we hate sin. If Jesus has paid the penalty of my sin, then I too am going to take sin seriously.

It means if sin is in opposition to God, then I will deal quickly with the sin in my life so that I enjoy my fellowship with God.

So rather than living in opposition to God, I am now longing and aching and have a desire for communion with God. It doesn't mean I'm never going to sin again.

However, it does mean I will not keep sinning with a carefree, it doesn't matter kind of attitude. So instead of making excuses and pretending we don't sin or pretending that sin isn't serious and that my behaviour doesn't matter, I will take that seriously and I will long to see change and transformation in my life.

[19 : 50] That's what's at the heart of verse 6. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. We have a desire to change and be transformed. Now, if you're someone here this morning who says, oh yeah, I have fellowship with God, I'm a child of God, but you keep on sinning with this carefree attitude of, well what does it matter if I do something wrong?

It really doesn't matter. If that's the way you think, look at the rest of verse 6. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or know him.

In other words, it's a false claim. You can't tolerate sin and at the same time enjoy fellowship with God. It means you've never seen him or known him.

In other words, you can't be a child of God. You can't be trying to live the Christian life and at the same time messing about and flirting with sin as if it doesn't matter.

So, let me ask us the question, what is our attitude to sin? Which brings us to the next big heading, the right approach to sin.

[21 : 14] And here we see the same kind of pattern repeated. We've got the same three headings in this section. But they all tell us something different. First, what sin is.

Look at verse 8. He who does what is sinful is of the devil. Now that's really strong language, isn't it?

Is that really true? Does that really mean that when I sin, I'm of the devil? Well, in the Gospel of John, we have the same idea.

And I think it helps explain it to us a little bit better. Have a look back. We read it at the beginning. John chapter 8 verse 44. John chapter 8 verse 44.

And here Jesus has been talking to the religious leaders who are all in opposition to Jesus and they're wanting to kill Jesus.

[22 : 14] They want to get rid of him. They're opposed to him. And look how Jesus describes them. Look at the language he uses. Verse 44 of John chapter 8.

Look what he says. You belong to your father, the devil. And you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Strong language, but true.

You see, again, it's telling us that sin isn't just an action or a thought. It's so much deeper than just getting a few things wrong. Sin reflects our true identity and it says when we're living a sinful life, we belong to our father, the devil.

Go back to 1 John chapter 3, verse 8. That's why he says, 1 John 3, verse 8, he who does what is sinful is of the devil.

[23 : 36] Because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. Just as sin is at the very nature of the devil, so sin is our true nature.

So can we begin to see how tolerating sin is completely incompatible with enjoying God. Sin is not just a misdemeanor, it is actually a reflection of our true identity.

It is of the devil. Now how are we going to deal with that? Because I don't like reading that about myself. Well thankfully God has done something about this sin problem.

Look what Jesus has done. Look at the rest of verse 8. We'll read verse 8 again. He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God, that's Jesus, appeared was to destroy the devil's work. So again we've got this primary reason that Jesus came into the world was to destroy, to break the power and the hold the devil has over us.

[24 : 52] Because the devil's work is to seduce us so that we are people who oppose God and rebel against God. That's what he's been doing from the beginning.

That's what he did in the Garden of Eden. He is convincing us that living in the kingdom of darkness is a much better place to live than walking in the light.

So Jesus came to destroy his work. He came to break the power of sin and its hold over us. So through his death on the cross he has rescued us from the way in which we walk in darkness.

He takes us from that kingdom and brings us into a kingdom of light. God. And because of what Jesus has done that means we are no longer children of the devil we are children of God.

So have a look at chapter 3 verse 1 what we looked at last week. Because of what Jesus has done how great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

[26 : 01] And if that hasn't sunk in and we don't believe it look at the rest of it. And that is what we are. Because Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil.

Because of our faith in him we are no longer belonging to our father the devil. We now have God as our father. We've been released from one family and we've been transferred into the family of God. Jesus came to break the power of sin. He's destroyed the work of the devil so that we can enjoy fellowship with God. This is what he has done for us.

Now again I know you know this. And in some ways this is foundational and we're rehearsing so much of what we know to be true. But unless we've got this foundation right we're not going to have the right approach to our sin.

Because this all affects how we should live. Look at verse 9. Verse 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin.

[27 : 20] Again it's almost the same as what we have in verse 6. It sounds like that contradiction. but we already know have a look at chapter 1 verse 9 that God has provided a way for us to be restored when we do sin.

So when we do mess up and we do fail look at chapter 1 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.

So it can't be saying that you're meant to be perfect and never get anything wrong again. So what does it mean when it says in verse 9 no one who is born of God will continue to sin?

Well again I think it's that we now have a new approach to sin. Rather than tolerate sin we hate sin.

If Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil then that means I will take sin seriously.

it means I will no longer put up with the behaviours in my life that destroy and damage my relationship with God.

[28 : 35] I will no longer put up with the behaviours in my life that damage and destroy my relationship with God. Instead I will fight the sin that seeks to wreak havoc.

And how are we going to fight it? Well let's read verse 9 again. No one who is born of God will continue to sin and here's the reason because God's seed remains in him.

Now let's explain what that means. When a child is born they carry with them something of the DNA of their father.

They carry something of the father's seed. That can't be changed. It can't be tampered with. So as the child grows day by day they begin to look like physically and sound like their biological father.

They inherit something of their father's seed. Now that's the same idea that we have here in this verse. God as it were has implanted his seed in us so that we become more like him and we live like him.

[29 : 57] As his children we now have something of the very nature of God within us so that we now view sin the same way as he do. We hate sin and we fight against sin.

And the reason why we can fight it is because we have his seed. He has given us the power of his Holy Spirit within us so that we can live the life that he has called us to.

Just as Jesus broke the power of sin in our lives so the spirit in us is that ongoing power to fight sin.

So the reason we do not continue with this carefree it doesn't matter approach is because we have something of the very nature of God we are his children and so we begin to grow like him.

Now let me ask this if we have this it doesn't matter approach to sin if you're looking at some of your behaviours and I look at some of my behaviours the things I do and I go you know what it really

doesn't matter and brush it under the carpet and let's not deal with it it's okay if that is our approach then you can't be in fellowship with God look look look at look at the rest of verse 9 well we'll read

all of verse 9 no one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God if you are a child of God you will have a hatred for sin and you'll want to deal with it so what is our approach to sin you see sin is serious it

damages and destroys our fellowship with

[32 : 04] God so we must have a right attitude and we must have a right approach towards sin in fact look at verse 10 this is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God nor is anyone who does not love his brother our behaviour matters there is no such thing as a little sin there is no such thing as a white lie how we live what we say and what we do is of great importance because it tells us what kind of child I am now if my attitude to sin is I want to resist it if my approach to sin is

I want to fight it then you're a child of God we can have great confidence that we are growing in our fellowship with God but if you tolerate sin if you are indifferent to sin then you are not a child of God you are still walking in darkness this is not a call to say you are perfect or somehow to be perfect it is saying have a right attitude to sin have a right approach to sin because those who are children of God will continue to grow in their fellowship with him let's take a moment in the quietness to reflect on what we've just heard heard got that we so often fail and fall.

We do get things wrong. We say things we should not say. And we think things that we dare not want anybody else to know.

So, Father, we come afresh. We confess our sins, knowing that you are just and faithful and will forgive us and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Thank you that Jesus has come to take away our sin. Thank you that he has come to destroy the work of the devil so that we can live in right relationship with you.

[35 : 36] Please help us to have a right attitude to our ongoing sin problem. Help us to have a right approach to the sin that we see in our lives.

And may you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to fight it every day and to run quickly to Jesus in whom we enjoy our deep relationship with you.

we thank you for all that you have done for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. We're going to sing together a great song which says, and this is the song and this is the song that we can sing if we are in right relationship with God.

I once was lost in darkest nights thought I knew the way the sin that promised joy in life had led me to the grave. And then it goes on to say that's that's that's