

THE MESSAGE FROM GOD

1 John 1:5-10

Intro: For those of you who may not have been with us at least for the past two Sundays, let me say that we have just started the study of the First Epistle of John. This is the same John who wrote the Gospel of John. He also wrote the two one-chapter letters which follow 1 John. They have been given the names 2 John and 3 John. 2 John was written to an unnamed lady; 3 John was written to a man by the name of Gaius. The Apostle John also wrote the last book of the Bible, the book which is rightly called, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” the first words of that last book of the Bible.

So the Apostle John was used by the Holy Spirit to give us five books of the New Testament.

One thing that makes these books especially important, is that they were written toward the end of the first century. The Apostle John was the sole survivor of the apostles. It had been in the neighborhood of sixty years since the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and twenty plus years since the death of the Apostle Paul. But the Apostle John had had many years to think over what the Lord Jesus had taught him and the other apostles, time to change his mind about many things that the Lord had taught. But that is not what we find as we read through 1 John. Instead we find that the Apostle John’s convictions about Who the Lord was, and what the Lord had taught, were just as strong as they had been when He first knew the Lord and had learned from Him.

That should be very important to us. If the Apostle John had merely been emotionally with the Lord as a Person, and with His teaching, those impressions would have faded away if the Lord had not been speaking the truth. But John’s convictions about Christ and His teaching were just as strong, and possibly stronger, than they were when John first became a disciple of the Lord. That ought to strengthen our faith as well.

Furthermore, these writings of the Apostle John (and I am thinking now especially of First John), give us a glimpse into some of the problems that the people of God were having toward the end of the first century. Specifically I am thinking of what John gave as his reason for writing 1 John. You will find that as I have been pointing out from the beginning of our study, in 1 John 5:13. He had many reasons for writing, and we come

across those statement as we read through his epistle. But the one that sums up the main reason is in 1 John 5:13. Let me read it to you. (Read 1 John 5:13.)

So he was writing to those who had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation from sin. But he wanted them to be assured that they were saved. If we have truly trusted in Christ, as opposed to just joining a church, or turning over a new leaf in our lives, *we can know that we are saved, and we need to know it.* That is why John wrote this epistle. Evidently there was a great need for this among those early Christians. And we can be sure that Christians in every generation have had this need. Perhaps it is a problem with some of you. If so, 1 John is the epistle that you need to understand. This why we all need to be reading 1 John. I have a reputation for being slow in going through a book of the Bible as I teach it. You go ahead of me and read this epistle at least once a week, and more than that if you have time. Then as I catch up with you, perhaps the Lord will enable me to strengthen some of the truths in the epistle with which you have already become familiar.

1 John is an epistle addressed to us, those of us who are members of the family of God, those of us who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. But I want to remind all of you again that every book of the Bible was written under conditions which were different from the writing of any other book that has ever been written. John wrote under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guided him in the very words that he used, and yet the Holy Spirit did it so that John's knowledge, and John's concern for the people to whom he was writing, are very apparent. The Holy Spirit was the Author; the Apostle John was the writer. This makes First John a part of the Word of God. I hope we all understand this.

Last Sunday we learned from the first four verses of chapter 1 that even in the first century there were false teachers who were not teaching the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. Some were teaching that Jesus became the Christ when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism, but that He ceased to be Christ, the Son of God, when on the Cross He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If that were true, then Jesus could not be our Savior. If Joseph, not God, was His Father, then our Lord would have needed a Savior just like everyone else. So this was a serious heresy.

Another idea about Christ our Savior was that He was not a real person. He was more of a phantom, or an unbodied spirit. They taught that you could reach out to touch the Lord, but not feel anything. That is why the Apostle John began this epistle as he did. (Read 1:1-3a.)

Now what can we say from this? It emphasizes that if you are going to be assured of your salvation, *you need to know the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a real Man and yet truly God in one Person. If you have any question about the Person of Christ, that is, Who He really was, then you need to go back and soak in the teaching of the Gospel of John.* The Apostle John also told his readers why he wrote the Gospel. And you will see that in the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31. Let me read those verses to you:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

So the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John are very, very important writings, and we all need to have our minds and hearts saturated with the truth that they contain.

But now let's move ahead.

As we come to verse 5 of the first chapter of John, we learn that just as it is important to know the truth about Jesus Christ if we are to be assured of our salvation, so it is important to know the truth about God – and First John will give us a lot of help in getting to know God.

I don't think I am making an overstatement when I say that most Christians are very deficient in their understanding of God. This is one of many places where the writings of John will help us. But notice what verse 5 tells us, and how John introduced what he had to say. I have called this

I. THE MESSAGE FROM GOD (1 John 1:5).

This verse ought to arouse our interest. What John is saying here is that he had come with a message from God. It is a written message so that all future generations would be able to read it. It did not originate with the Apostle John (although he was in total agreement with it), but it came

from God! This is a divine revelation. This is John's way of saying that his message was divinely inspired. This is what I have been telling you about the books of the Bible. They have come from God. But here we have what God told John to write down for all of the people of God. This is what we need to know about God *first!* Look closely at the message. This is lesson one when we want to know God. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

"Light" and "darkness" are figures of speech that you will get well acquainted with in reading the Bible. "Light" stands for purity, and relating to God it means that *He is holy, He is righteous*. And to emphasize how holy God is, the second part of the message is, "And in Him is NO darkness at all." Light and darkness are opposites, aren't they? So "darkness" is a symbol of evil.

These are two of the most important words in the Bible, light and darkness. And they give clear evidence that light is good, and that darkness is bad. This is true when they are used in a moral sense. Peter described salvation in 1 Peter 2:9 as when God calls us "out of darkness into His marvelous light." Light is descriptive of God; darkness is descriptive of all of us. The wonderful thing about God is that He is totally holy, and totally righteous, and you will never find the slightest trace of sin in Him. That is why we need to be saved. God is absolutely incapable of sin. There is no sin in Him.

But how can sinful human beings who are darkness have fellowship with an absolutely holy God? They can't. God is holy and God is unchanging. So if God and man are to get together, the change has to come in man. But we can't change ourselves. That is what God does. And He does it through the sacrifice Christ made on the Cross. "Christ died for our sins." And when God blesses us with faith in Christ, we become light in the Lord – not perfect light, but light. The perfection for us comes as we grow in the Lord, and will be finally completed when we see the Lord.

Now only God Himself can make us understand that He is light. Let me say it again, that is why we need to be saved because it is only through salvation that we can have fellowship with a holy God.

Now, in the light of what it means for us to know a Holy God and His holy Son, and to have fellowship with Them, what are the consequences of such a relationship with God. There is often a difference between

“say” and how they are actually living. I am going to call the last five verses of 1 John chapter 1,

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROFESSION AND POSSESSION (1 John 1:6-10).

Notice that verses 6, 8, and 10 begin with the word, “if.” But notice that the word “if” is also found in verses 7 and 9, but they are in contrast with verses 6, 8, and 10.

In verses 6, 8, and 10 the emphasis is upon “say,” or talk, but without a corresponding living demonstration. Each of these verses undoubtedly points to the Apostle John’s own observation of what was going on in the lives of those who professed to have fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Verse 6 describes the person who claims to have fellowship with God, but whose life has not been changed. He professes to be a child of God, but he lives like people in the world who make no such profession. It is a basic denial of the Gospel. It is along with that a denial of the sinfulness of sin. We often distinguish between a person’s walk and his talk, but a true fellowship with the Lord includes the talk as a part of the walk.

Verse 7 is the picture of a true child of God who understands what it means. The light has made a difference in his life. He knows true fellowship with God, and the continuing effect upon his sin which is the result of fellowship with God.

In verse 8 we have “sin” in the singular, which Dr. Wuest says refers to the sin nature. He denies the darkness in which he was born and in which he lives. He is self-deceived, and does not have the truth in him. But he thinks that he is acceptable to God as he is.

Verse 9, like verse 7, is an indication that this person knows not only that sin was his problem, but that it continues to be his problem. However, as the Apostle John brings out in his epistle, there is a difference between knowing that we can still sin as compared with living in sin. A true child of God is very conscious as he walks in the light of what God is, that he still can, and does, sin but that both forgiveness and cleansing are what he seeks, and can only find, in God.

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Verse 10 is another case of a person who professes to be in fellowship with God, but refuses to acknowledge sin in himself.

Note the person described in verse 6 is a liar. The person described in verse 8 is deceived and does not have the truth. In verse 9 by his claim he makes God a liar, and obviously there is no evidence that he understands or cares about what the Word of God has to say.

Concl: So how important it is to know the perfect character of God in order that we will see our need of salvation, and that the outstanding evidence that a person is really saved will be his concern about his sin and his desire to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

The great obstacle that stands in the way of true fellowship with God and with Christ, is sin. We all need to ask ourselves even if verses 7 and 9 describe us, How careful, or careless, am I about sin? Does it grieve me? Am I quick to confess it to the Lord? Do I pray for strength to resist temptation, and power to live a life that is pleasing and glorifying to the Lord?