

## Introduction

- John in his Gospel wrote with the purpose of convincing non-believers to believe:
  - *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name* (John 20:31)
- In his letter, John was writing to those who were already Christians, but who were asking the question:
  - "what does a genuine Christian life look like?"
  - and who were probably in danger of being deceived or drawn away in some way
  - *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.* (2:26)
  - *Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.* (3:7)
  - *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.* (4:1)
- One of the commentators, Leon Morris, sums up John's purpose as bringing:
  - "assurance of the reality of their faith and a true knowledge of what the faith implies" (Leon Morris)
- That's why we are beginning a series of studies in the evening on, initially at least, 1 John:
  - to remind us and reassure us about the reality of our faith
  - and to help us understand what our faith implies...

## The Word of Life (vs.1-4)

- First chapter clearly has two sections:
  - vs.1-4, and vs.5-10
  - in fact, the second section thematically runs on into chapter 2, but we'll start it tonight and pick it up further next week
- (1) *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*
- Talks of gospel (neuter) and focus of that Gospel in person of Jesus (which we saw/touched/etc)
  - from beginning - gospel not an after thought!
- (2) *The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*
- Emphasis on provability and tangibility of Jesus:
  - we saw, touched, heard, 3 of the 5 senses;
  - contrast with proto-gnostic "matter is inherently evil; God could have nothing to do with matter; Jesus wasn't really God's son;" or he only seemed to live in flesh (Docetism)
- Note also how John uses simple repetition to emphasise his ideas
- (3) *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*
  - picture of including the readers in a circle - the life of Christ and of the Father is the centre of the circle, round which are his people
  - by proclaiming Jesus to them, John is inviting his readers to join the circle, to have fellowship with his people, by having the same centre (Father and the Son) to share fellowship with His people
  - and John says, when we are in the circle, though we share fellowship with one another, we don't just know about but also share fellowship with the centre, with God
- (4) *We write this to make our joy complete.*
  - "to make our joy complete"

- he's not just selling a package, do this and you'll be joyful, he's inviting them to be part of a community, share that joy

### Summary

- We proclaim the **reality of Jesus**, who is the **centre of our faith**; it is from this centre that the life of faith flows

## Walking in the Light (vs.5-10)

- This section really runs on into chapter 2, but we'll dip into it just now, and pick up further next week.
- (5) *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*
  - God is light has two, complementary, ranges of meaning:
    - first, God is light, illumination, ability to see (a) **sin**, and (b) **what God is telling us**, his message, himself, there is nothing hidden when he opens our eyes, he brings comprehension and understanding and conviction
    - second He is light - **he is pure, holy**, incandescent, white, clean, there is nothing black or dark or evil in Him
- (6) *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*
  - consequence of, or description of, a right walk with God, a right fellowship with Him is one where the manner of our walk matches the character of the one with whom we walk
  - in other words, **we'll become holy!**
  - say we are Christians yet our lives are dark with sin, something's amiss!!
  - either we've mis-understood what it means to be a Christian, the characteristics of following the Master, or we've not yet made that leap into the light
- The same consequence follows if we take "**light**" here as **illumination**:
  - if we walk in God's light, we will see our sin, we will understand his challenges to our lifestyle, and therefore our life should increasingly look like his...
- What about the danger of perfectionism? : "**I feel my life is dark, therefore I'm not a Christian! Aaargh!**"
  - **see vs.8-10!!!**
- (7) *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*
  - fellowship with **one another!!**
  - yes, with God - cf v.3, but John says "**with one another**" deliberately, for it is in our relationships with one another that the light is seen in our lives!
- (8) *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*
- (9) *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
- (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.*
- "Living in the light" is not about living a perfect life:
  - rather it is living in the light of having our sins dealt with, living gratefully, humbly, living aware of our sin, hating it, seeking to confess it, deal with it, keep short accounts with God, seeking to live purified lives...

## Conclusion

- We proclaim Jesus, whom we ourselves have encountered:
  - some debate in papers just now about an exemption granted to churches and Christian employers in employment law so that they can specify that their employees need to be Christians to fulfil their role;
  - secular commentators fear rampant discrimination...

- but the principle is good, and John is here reflecting on it!
- we can't introduce people to one we do not know - and that one, Jesus, the Word of Life
  
- Our fellowship with Him comes as we walk in his way:
  - and that means coming to Him, always, as sinners needing forgiveness;
  - we can't come pretending we are good, or giving the impression we are pure!
  - we come confessing;
  - and we come confident of his forgiveness!!
  
- Christian life: focused on Jesus, confessing sin, knowing forgiveness!