***Small Groups - Wednesday 13th May***

**1 JOHN: (1) Gospel freedom**

*In John’s day there were people who said that Jesus was not both God and man. The same is true today. John’s letter wants to get us straight on the basics, so that we can be sure.*

**What you should feel**

**Read 1 John 1:1-4**

**Questions**

* *John’s opening words seem a little cryptic.
What is he saying, do you think?*
* *Why might he need to emphasise this?*
* *What should we feel at the end of reading this letter (v 4)?*

**Comment**

Today people are more likely to say that Jesus was really just a man who taught us *about* God or gave us some insight into God. In John’s day, it seems to have been the opposite. The Greek world thought flesh was dirty or corrupt, and so they could not get their heads around the idea that Jesus was God *incarnate*. John tells them in plain

language, *We saw him, heard him, touched him.* Jesus, the Word of life, who lived with the Father, appeared in human flesh. Grasping this truth is vital because it is intimately connected to experiencing the truth of the gospel—to enjoying fellowship with God and being joined to his people. It’s only when we embrace this truth that our joy will be complete (v 4): full and never-ending.

**Apply**

False teaching will often come down to this: Jesus was not both fully God and fully man. Ask a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon, (and sadly, many members and leaders in mainline churches) and you will discover that this life-draining, Bible-denying, joy-sapping heresy is alive and well in our generation. We must be aware of it and sure

of our ground to oppose it and to defend the truth; because only the truth about Christ can bring real life to people.

**Question**

* *Which are you most likely to tip over into: forgetting that Jesus is really God or forgetting that he is really man?*

**A message that matters**

**Read 1 John 1:5-7**

**Questions**

* *What lie is John talking about here?
Why is this lie an attractive one to believe?*
* *What is the test for whether our walk with Christ is genuine or not? What do you think this means?*
* *What benefits do we experience when we walk in the light (v 7)?*

**Comment**

Light and darkness simply do not mix. So don’t think you can know God and continue to live your way. How can you expect to be friends with God and rebel against him at the same time?! Notice that this is the message of Jesus himself (v 5); how we live really matters and is the test of whether or not our faith is genuine. Living in the light is striving to be holy as we please God—and as we do so, we can be confident of forgiveness through Jesus and enjoy a genuine connection with his family.

**Pray**

Thank God for the gospel of light; and pray you would make a genuine response to it.

**(2) Freely forgiven**

*John is addressing two opposite errors: first, that you can know God and still walk in darkness; second, that you do not sin and therefore do not need God’s forgiveness.*

Both of these views are alive and well today.

**Questions**

* *Have you heard or seen these two views expressed? What form did they take?*
* *Which of these two false views are you most prone to believing (and living)?*

**Self deceit**

**Read 1 John 1:8-10**

These are glorious verses, often used in church liturgies before a prayer of confession. Let’s think carefully about them.

**Questions**

* *How easy is it, do you think, to deceive ourselves about just how sinful we are?*
* *Why would we think that way?*
* *What is the first step in the remedy for this false thinking?*

**Comment**

It might be our pride, a sense of our own guilt, or the result of comparing ourselves with others who we think we are “better”

than. Whatever the cause, claiming to be without sin is self-deceit and a denial of the gospel truth about ourselves. *You and I are*

*sinners.* And the first step towards finding forgiveness is to recognise that—to confess our sins, not just in a general sense but in

specific detail (v 9).

**Wonderful grace**

**Re-read 1 John 1:8-10**

* *Why does John also say that God is just, do you think?*
* *What two things does God offer to those who come to him knowing that they are unworthy sinners deserving of judgment?*

**Comment**

God is faithful (v 9) to his promises and to his wayward people. But perhaps supremely, he is faithful to the willing sacrifice of his Son, the Lord Jesus. At the cross, both justice and mercy were satisfied. Not only does God’s grace forgive us, but it works in us to “purify us from all sin”—the lifelong process of walking away from sin towards a life of righteous holiness.

**Undeniable realities**

**Question**

* *What conclusion do these verses tell us we should draw if someone denies the reality of sin?*

**Apply**

People tend to hate the idea of sin! It is seen as old-fashioned, repressive, guilt-inducing, and destructive—especially if we dare say

that children are sinners! And yet these claims fly in the face of God’s word, our own experience and common sense. God does not lie about this painful truth because he loves us and wants us to know the joy and freedom that forgiveness brings.

**Question**

* *What will it mean for you to take these verses seriously in your view of your own life, your prayers to God, and your words to others?*

1 John 1:8-10 Tuesday 5 May