***Small Groups - Wednesday 27th May***

**(Study 1) Free to sin?**

*John uses the language of opposites to press his point home—light and darkness, truth and lies, love and hate—but his purpose is to help us see the issues at stake.*

**What grace has done**

**Read 1 John 2:1-6**

**Questions**

1. *Do you think it is possible not to sin and to “live as Jesus did”
(v 1, 6)?*
2. *What two wonderful truths about Jesus does John lay out for us in verses 1-2?*
3. *Why do we need both?*

John is aiming these words at two different sorts of people: *the complacent,* who think that because God forgives them, it doesn’t

matter how they live; and *the fearful,* who think that because they sin, they cannot truly know God. John’s concern is to reassure

the fearful without making the complacent more complacent; and to challenge the complacent without making the fearful even less assured. The answer for both is to understand the work of Jesus, both on the cross *then* and in heaven *now*.

First, Jesus was an atoning sacrifice *then* on the cross. Literally, Jesus is the “propitiation for our sins”—his death satisfies and turns away God’s wrath from us.

Second, Jesus is also an advocate for us *now.* Imagine you’re standing before a king, trying to explain your rebellion against him— and then the king’s own son steps forward and speaks on your behalf. Or imagine a law court in which you’re in the dock, and there’s no doubt you’re guilty—but then your lawyer plays his trump card: an argument no one can refute. He has already paid the penalty for your crime in full. Jesus is that advocate for us before the Father now.

**Responding to grace**

**Re-read 1 John 2:1-6**

**Questions**

1. *How do we know that our faith is genuine, and that we have truly been forgiven (v 3-6)?*
2. *What does it mean to “love … God” in these verses (v 5)?*

**Apply**

When we truly love someone, it is more than a feeling; we will genuinely want to please them, and we will change in order to do so. And we will want to grow like them in the things we admire about them. It is the same for true believers in Christ. It might seem that we can grab his forgiveness and then carry on as normal. But the

sign that we have truly understood the gospel message is that it is changing us. It’s a hard test to apply to ourselves, and even harder to others. But the important thing is not so much how obviously sinful or holy you are, but rather your direction of travel: towards love and purity, and away from sin and pride. That is true love for God.

**Questions**

1. *Looking at yourself, how do you stack up against this test?*
2. *If you fear you do not come out very well, what does 1:9 and 2:1-2 encourage you to do and to know?*

**(Study 2) *Free To Love***

*At first, John seems to be a little confused in this passage. Is what he is talking about new or isn’t it?*

**Old yet new**

**Read 1 John 2:7-11**

**Questions**

1. *What new “faith test” does John give us in verse 10?*
2. *How is this both an old and a new commandment, do you think?*

In verses 3-5, John has been saying that we must walk our talk. The sign of being a Christian is obedience. Now he imagines someone responding, *Hang on a minute— when I signed up to Christianity, I was told it was all about grace and mercy: that it wasn’t what I did that counted but what God had done for me. Now you’re springing something*

*new on us.*

So John reminds his readers that obedience has always been the sign of belonging to God’s people. It is nothing new. The gospel calls us to faith and to repentance—turning from sin to obey God. It was the message of the Old Testament and the message that Jesus preached (Micah 6:8; Mark 1:14-15).

**Apply**

**Questions**

1. *Is the call to repentance and obedience part of the way you present the gospel to others?*
2. *What happens when it gets left out?*
3. *How can we talk about repentance and the obedience of faith without giving someone the impression that we in some way earn salvation?*

**For the old and young**

**Read 1 John 2:12-14**

In these verses, the style suddenly changes, and the repeated phrase “I am writing to you…” shows us that John is summarising what he has said so far in his letter.

**Questions**

1. *What three important points does John want to impress upon us all?*
2. *Who is “him who is from the beginning” (v 13, 14)?*
3. *What new perspective does John introduce in the last line of verse 14?*

His summary is simply this: we are sinners, God forgives us through Jesus, and because of this, we should strive to live a sin-free life. This is the message as it has *always* been, because it is the message of the Father and Son, who are from the beginning. But this life is also new, because it is the life that shows we are part of the new age that Jesus ushered in. Love towards God and other believers is characteristic of the new age of light, which has overcome the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan.

**Pray**

Thank God that you can be part of this new era through the cross of Christ. And ask God to help you walk in the right direction: to live like Christ and to overcome the evil one.1 John 2:15-29