**Wednesday 10th June**

**1 JOHN: (3.1) Free to be different**

*Christians belong to the dawning new age of the rule of King Jesus.
But for the time being, we still have to live in the real world of rebellion and hatred.*

It’s a tension with which we all struggle.

**For God so loved…**

**Read 1 John 2:15**

**Questions**

1 *What are we being called to do in this verse?*

2 *How does this square with what is said about “the world” in John 3:16, do you think?*

The word “world” in the Bible can be used in very different ways. (The seventeenth century theologian John Owen listed no fewer than 16 different nuances of it!) It can simply refer to everything that God has made—the planet we live on and the people who live on it. John 3:16 tells us that God loved the rebellious people he made so much he sent his own Son to die. But in this letter, “the world” is shorthand for the way of thinking and living that dominates a world that is hostile to God—and all social and cultural pressures on believers to conform to those sinful patterns of behaviour.

God hates this sinful way of life—and he expects us to hate it too—even when we see it in ourselves.

**Rejecting the world**

**Read 1 John 2:16-29**

**Questions**

1 *What three characteristics of worldly thinking and living does John point out for us in verse 16?*

2 *Struggling against the world is hard, so why bother (v 17, 27)?*

3 *What else will make it difficult for us to live in this world (v 18-19)?*

4 *What does John encourage us to do as we face this hostility (v 28)?*

5 *What have we been given to help us with this (v 20, 21)?*

The pressure of sin is everywhere. From within ourselves (the lust of the flesh, v 16), from outside (the lust of the eyes) and from the arrogant pride in ourselves that defaults to boasting about ourselves with no dependence on God or gratitude towards him. But these are all part of a world that is dead and passing away (v 17). Those who truly belong to Christ have received the truth about him, have been anointed by the Holy Spirit and have the sure hope of eternity to look forward to. John encourages us to “continue in him” as we reject false teachers and the pull of worldly sinfulness. We walk away from these things towards the goodness and light of God’s new creation.

**Questions**

1 *How do we recognise antichrists (v 22)?*

2 *Why can it sometimes be difficult to spot them (v 21)?*

3 *What do you think it means in practice to “continue in him” (v 28)?*

**Pray**

Turn your answers to the questions above into prayers.

**1 JOHN: (3.2) Free to obey**

*“He’s got his mother’s eyes... I’m afraid she’s going to have her father’s nose... She looks just like her Great-aunt Mabel...”*

We all know the routine. Everyone coos over the newborn, trying to work out who they resemble, when all the time they look like… well… like a baby! John says we have become God’s children. The question is: do we show the family likeness?

**What we are and will be**

**Read 1 John 3:1-3**

**Questions**

1 *List out the things that show how God has lavished his love on us.*

2 *What can we look forward to?*

3 *What should knowing this cause us to do now?*

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The language is so familiar to us that it’s easy not to be amazed by it. John, however, half expects his readers not to believe it, so he adds, “And that is what we are!” Take time to reflect on the lavish love of God. You might find it helpful to meditate on these verses: **1 John 4:9-10; John 13:1-17; Romans 8:31-39**.

Even John acknowledges that precisely what will happen to us in the new creation is a bit of a mystery (1 John 3:2). We don’t know what we will be like when Christ returns and we are transformed. But John *does* know that we will be like Jesus and we will see Jesus as he really is—the glorious Lord over all creation. In the meantime, out of gratitude for the love God has lavished upon us, our goal should

be to bridge the gap. With the certain hope of one day being pure like Christ, we try to purify ourselves now. John knows we can’t be sinless yet (see 1:8). But he expects us to try as hard as we can to become as pure as we can.

**What sin really is**

**Read 1 John 3:4-6**

**Questions**

1 *How does verse 4 make sin so much bigger than simply law-breaking?*

2 *Why will true Christians not keep on habitually sinning in the same way*

*again and again (v 5-6)?*

Sin is not just rule-breaking; it is a rejection of the rule-giver: God. It’s not simply that I know a law but fail to keep it. Sin’s essence—”lawlessness”— is that we make ourselves the arbiters of the law, deciding whether or not we will keep it. You can be a lawless lawkeeper! And that’s why we need the new hearts that God gives us when we trust in Christ and as he pours out his Spirit on us. We’ve been born of God. We have God’s genes, and so we *cannot* go on sinning. But we need a constant reminder of this in the face of the pressure of the world and our own sinful nature.

**Pray**

Think of a couple of specific ways you want to grow more like Jesus. Then speak to God about them—today, and every day.