

25th September, 2022

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe,

light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love, what depths of peace.
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Read 1 John 2:12-14 and John 14:1-14 – We live in family

Sermon by Martin Beckwith

Today we continue our study of 1 John. It's one of the last Bible books to be written and intended for the 1st or 2nd generation Christians to counter false teaching circulating within the church from people who claimed a superior, enhanced understanding of Christianity at odds with its apostolic base. John reminds his readers that they already have a guaranteed heritage and inheritance in Christ. No enhancement is needed. But also that the inheritance should have practical consequences in how we live and interact with others day by day. Howard described it a couple of weeks ago as the "harmony between our inner and outer lives".

John writes in a series of interlinked thoughts and statements which many commentators compare to a grand spiral staircase of discussion moving from point to point, angle to angle, towards its conclusion. That's fine if you're used to climbing a grand spiral staircase; personally I prefer to think of each group of verses as an episode in a Sunday night costume drama, or The Archers, or even, possibly, a round of Strictly – something that's self contained - you can be entertained, even educated from it - but it's not complete in itself: you only get its full benefit when it's seen in context of what comes before and after it.

And, like all good scriptwriters, John has left a series of cliff-hangers from the previous episodes – bold, memorable and thought provoking statements,. Eg -

"If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness, we lie". 1:6
"the blood of Jesus ... purifies us from all sin" 1:7

"If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" 1:10
"Jesus Christ ... is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and ... also for the sins of the whole world" 2:1

"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness" 2:9

Do you believe them? And if so, what difference do they make ?

Then abruptly, in this short passage, John turns from teaching about the practice of being a Christian to review the bedrock on which all the practical, day to day experience and behaviour is built. He's deliberately reviewing and reminding us of the foundation of the faith on which his teaching is built. He's testing that it can support the Christ-like lifestyle it requires and withstand the assaults it will surely receive. Modern versions print these verses in blank verse, like a psalm or hymn - and certainly there's a poetic rhythm to it:- *I write to you .. because, I write to you ... because "*

which makes it stand out from the narrative around it. It's not an advert break or an old-fashioned interlude, it's part of the text, but it's a change of style and content.

He addresses 3 groups of people, twice to each. We need to consider who they are. "*Dear children*" is John's customary greeting to the whole church. It occurs frequently throughout the book. Remember John is in his 90s when he wrote this. Everyone would appear to him to be younger – his children in Christ; the Church's future.

So "*dear children*" means everyone, Christians through the centuries, regardless of age, race, sex, denomination, social or educational background, past experience or present circumstance – the whole church family including us here today. And the characteristic we all share is that our "*sins have been forgiven on account of his name*", and, therefore, "*you know the father*". A dynamic, sincere, on-going, daily, individual communication and relationship with God, enabled by the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's the bedrock of the existence, life and purpose and expression of the church.

Then there are two subsets identified within the whole.

Firstly "*fathers*"; the older generation; spiritually mature, probably with some church or family responsibility, with experience of knowing God and Christian life over many years, able to offer advice in different situations. Their characteristic is that "*you know him who is from the beginning*" (cf the opening words of both John's Gospel and this letter). It's referring quite specifically to Jesus, and drawing on their own memory and experience of knowing Jesus' presence through the changing scenes of life. It's an invitation to glance backwards to encourage the way forwards. Throughout our lifetimes of immense change and uncertainty this reminder of constant certainty is as relevant and welcome now as ever.

Secondly "*young men*" or the entire younger generation. Those who'll be leading the church in 10, 20 years' time. Those being trained week by week at home, or in youth groups or services or the universities - working out their faith and getting their priorities in order. Their characteristic is they "*have overcome the evil one*" because they "*are strong and the word of God lives in you*". We know we'll never fully overcome the evil one in this lifetime; the bias of our human nature prevents it. But we can know Satan doesn't control us or our destiny; that he doesn't dictate our plans and thinking. And that's because "*the word of God lives in you*", directing channelling our youthful strength, energy and enthusiasm. Actually, the principle holds good even without the "youthful" bit.

So the whole church family, collectively and individually, here and around the world, is embedded and rooted on the same foundation in Christ, and drawing on

those characteristics. It's the family likeness. It's what makes the Church unique, different from any other club or society. It defines our message and makes us relevant. In an unsettling time it's comforting and encouraging to consider our own spiritual foundations.

John has plenty more teaching to build on it in the rest of his letter.

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)

- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.



Collect: Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.* **Amen.**

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. 19th Oct. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 28th Sept., 26th Oct. in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise for Harvest, Sunday, 2nd October, 3pm – 4.30pm
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.