

## SALVATION - YOUR SIN

(I John 1:1 - 2:2)

LESSON AIM - I want my students to:

Know: That all Christians sin.

Feel: A responsibility to recognize their sin.

Do: To confess their sin to God daily with sincere repentance.

### INTRODUCTION TO I JOHN:

The epistle of I John was written by an anonymous eye-witness of the ministry of the Lord (1:1f). Because of its similar vocabulary with that of the Gospel of John, both are attributed to the same author. Many early church fathers state that the Apostle John, son of Zebedee, is the author.

The nature of the epistle is quite different than the writings of Paul. Instead of using lengthy logical arguments, John writes sharp, pointed truths which are expanded in several differing directions. The reader sees the truth under consideration much like the gardener admires a rose. He looks at it from many vantage points.

The purpose of the book is given in 5:13, where John indicates that he wrote to believers about having the assurance of salvation. Such a theme suggests that someone was troubling these believers about their salvation. The usual view assumes that Gnosticism was making inroads into the early churches and creating confusion. Gnostics taught that everything existed because of an eternal dualism, Good and Evil. One consequence of their doctrine was the denial of the person of Christ as taught in the Bible. A second teaching, emphasizing the unapproachableness to the Good, resulted in an anti-law spirit. Christians who would accept these tenets would become careless about sin, the world, and the teaching of Christ. While it is unlikely that Gnosticism was a highly developed philosophy at this early date, it does appear that certain people espousing similar truths were troubling these Christians (2:19).

John does not begin his epistle in the characteristic manner of Paul. There is no address, thanksgiving, or prayer. Rather, he writes with an authoritative declaration that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (1:1-4). He follows this with tests which believers can take to assure themselves that they have the life of God.

The date of the epistle is unknown, but usually set about 85-90 A.D.

### LESSON OUTLINE AND COMMENTS:

#### I. The reality of sharing the life of God (I John 1:1-5)

In the introductory verses, John established that Christians share the life of God because of the incarnation of Christ. To the Apostle, the reality of the Lord had been established by a personal, visible relationship with Him. He desired that all believers have the joy of knowing that they share the life of God.

A. The possibility of sharing the life of God (1:1-4)

John first relates the plan of God which provided an opportunity to have the life of God. This plan was effected by the coming of Christ in the flesh.

1. God became flesh (vv. 1-2)

In a very unusual manner, John writes two verses before coming to the verb "we declare" in verse 3. The beginning of the epistle is more easily understood if it is begun, "we are declaring. . . ." The content of John's declaring is Jesus Christ, who is represented by "that which" and "which." Jesus Christ is declared as the one who was from the beginning (John 1:1, 2). He has an eternal existence. He also had a physical existence. Jesus was heard, seen, gazed upon, and handled (Luke 24:39). He is the Word, the Revelation of God (John 1), who is life (v. 1).

The reality of Jesus coming in the flesh had great significance to the early Christians. Not only did John and others see the Lord in the flesh, but they preached that Christ came to earth as a man. His coming was important in that through it eternal life for mankind became possible. Jesus, having been with God the Father, manifested this life to John and the early Christians. Jesus came revealing the life of God to the world (v. 2).

2. God provided fellowship (vv. 3-4)

John labored in making known the ministry of Jesus so that others could have spiritual fellowship. The word fellowship means "to share something in common with another." In this passage, the thing to be shared is eternal life which was made available by the incarnation of Christ. Not only does the believer share eternal life with John and the other early witnesses to the ministry of Christ, but also with the Father and Jesus Christ. Since all believers have this life of God, this life can be tested as to its genuineness (v. 3).

As a result of passing these practical tests found throughout this epistle, the reader will have the assurance of eternal life, the life of God. The tests should not be looked upon as grievous but as giving joy.

B. The certainty of sharing the life of God (1:5)

As John sums up his introductory statements, he declares "God is light." He uses an O. T. figure also found in John 8 which identifies Jesus as the light of the world. In Scripture, "light," when used of God, symbolizes intellectual truth (Psalm 119:105), moral rightness (Eph. 5:8-14), and the glory of God (Matt. 17:2). In this passage, the emphasis is upon Jesus being moral light. He is contrasted with sin (1:6-10). Negatively stated, Jesus is in no way connected with evil. Since believers share the life of God and He is never evil, they should examine themselves to see if their professed life is genuine and thereby have joy.

## II. The testing of the life of God (I John 1:6 - 2:2)

In regard to John's first test for the believer, he views sin several ways. Those having the life of God will measure up favorably to John's teaching. Five hypothetical cases show possible attitudes toward sin. From these, John draws instructive conclusions. Genuine believers may live contrary to this instruction at times, but they will assent to its truth and seek forgiveness from God. They cannot live habitually contrary to the life of God.

### A. Habitual living in sin is inexcusable (1:6, 7)

For those who claim to have the life of God but habitually walk contrary to the light, in darkness, John has but one conclusion. They are liars. They are not doing that which is truth and this demonstrates they are not saved. John is not speaking about Christians who sin, but those whose whole manner of life is apart from God. As light symbolizes God, so darkness indicates evil. The only cure for such ones is to "walk in the light as He is in the light" (v. 6). By walking, John means "living." Therefore, he instructs these believers to live in the light; that is, to live keeping the life which they share with God ever present in their thinking. The standard for the believer is the light of Jesus Christ. The believer, who can measure up favorably to the standards set by Jesus Christ which are recorded in the Gospels, has the assurance of eternal life. All who have this life share a common life. John teaches that a proper walk with God results in a proper walk with all others who share this life (v. 7a).

For those sharing the life of God, forgiveness from sin is not only available, but it is appropriated. John did not declare that no sin occurs in a believer's life. He has been speaking against an altogether too common attitude among professing Christians that living with unconfessed sin is permissible. A genuine believer will recognize that God has established a process whereby sin's defilement can be cleansed. Christ's death provided a cleansing for all time. The means for this cleansing is the blood of Christ. The Father is always satisfied by the blood of Christ, because when applied it cleanses the believer from each sin. Thus, to have the life of God includes having God's attitude toward sin. Sin must be handled God's way. True believers will not habitually live in sin but rather seek cleansing from their sin (v. 7b).

### B. The removal of the sin nature is impossible (1:8, 9)

Among Christians, there has been a tendency to ignore the reality of their sin nature. John writes about those who say, "we are not possessing a sin (nature)." This denial could only occur through ignorance or through neglecting to understand sin and its affect. Those having the life of God must not presume that the sin nature and sin have no part in their lives. To ignore the reality of the sin nature has serious consequences. Such persons deceive themselves ("they wander from their proper course").

The word "deceive" is usually used in the N. T. to depict a serious departure from the truth (John 7:12, I John 2:26). The following words, "the truth is not in us," indicate this is the case. This hardly seems to refer to the truth about having a sin nature. Rather, John speaks of God's truth about Christ and salvation being absent from their lives. In other words, it is impossible for one who shares the life of God to deny that they have a sin nature and sin acts. They must have a sensitivity toward sin just as God does (v. 8).

The correct attitude about sin always culminates in confession of sin. To confess means "to acknowledge sin by agreeing with what God says about it." True believers habitually confess their acts of sin to God because of His life which they share (v. 9a).

To the confessing believer, God grants complete forgiveness. God is always faithful to His Word and right in His dealings with mankind. He provides a completely clean life. The Christian is released from the consequence of his sins and he is totally cleansed from every trace of unrighteousness. The believer becomes a sinless son rather than a sinning son (v. 9b). Although God desires believers to realize they have a sin nature and because of it the ability to perform sin acts, He demands that His children restore their life to a righteous condition by confessing their sins to Him.

C. The denial of sin acts is unscriptural (1:10)

There have arisen from the earliest days those who espoused perfectionism, the ability to no longer sin. John writes that this attitude is contrary to the Word of God. He is concerned about those who say they have not sinned and are in a state of not sinning. Those who claim sinlessness, (who obviously ignore their sin actions), make God a liar. God has spoken that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Much of the N. T. teaches that Christians do sin. Those who claim otherwise must believe sin is only a mistake or be ignorant of God's Word. John writes that "His word is not in us." He does not indicate that such ones are unsaved, but that they are unbiblical. They make God a liar. Both charges are very serious. Those who share the life of God are to be sensitive both to God and that which He says. Sin acts must not be ignored (v. 10).

D. The practice of sin is not inevitable (2:1a)

Because of the sin nature and acts of sin, it would appear that John is teaching sin is inevitable. Such is not the case. John's purpose in writing is to prevent sin in the life of the Christian. To accept sin without feeling bad about it is a terrible attitude. John wrote so that the Christian will not choose to sin even one time. Every act of sin is wrong. Sin is always the Christian's fault and responsibility. To look at the past and conclude "I will sin today" is always an ungodly attitude. Sin may come but it is an unnecessary part of the life which you share with God (v. 1a).

E. The remedy for sin is Jesus Christ (2:1b-2)

The basis for sharing the life of God and consequently for testing the genuineness of this life is the work of Christ for the believer. John indicates that all believers have an advocate (lawyer) before God. This lawyer, who helps the Christian by representing the believer before the Father, is Jesus Christ, the righteous. Every believer can rest assured that he has the best possible representation. When a believer sins even one time, this lawyer is present (v. 1). Instead of arguing a case by giving extenuating circumstances, He placates the wrath of God, who is offended by every act of sin. Propitiation means "to placate the offended person, to satisfy." It is the one who provides salvation for the believer who also satisfies ("He is the propitiation") God's demands whenever a believer sins.

John further states that Christ's death satisfies God concerning the sins of the whole (entire) world. This is the picture and attitude that the believer should have toward sin.

CONCLUSION:

The believer should keep sin away from himself by godly living and confession of sin. He must have a daily carefulness about the reality of sin. God always hates sin and must be placated, even when one who shares His life commits sin. Jesus Christ's death for sin satisfied God's wrath toward all men. Unfortunately, the universal pardon from God for sin, which is offered to all, has never been accepted by most of mankind because they have never heard of their need and its availability. To possess the life of God is a wonderful reality with serious responsibilities that must not be neglected.