

Truth for Today

The Bible explained

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Broadcast Date: 31 January 2016

No. T0922

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Life in the family of God: Family with the Father

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*.

Can I begin by asking you a question? Is your family special to you? I'm sure it is. Your family is special to God as well! Families are a great joy to most, but within families sometimes relationships can be difficult, parents and children do not always see eye to eye. Have you ever thought about God's family? Did you know that when you trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation you immediately become part of God's family? God becomes your Father and your relationship to Him is like a child to a Father. It is wonderful to know that we can have this intimate relationship with the great and mighty God. This morning we are going to look at the relationship we children have with God our Father. Please turn with me in your Bible to 1 John 1; you can find it just a few pages back from the end of your Bible. We are starting a new four part series entitled "Life in the family of God." Our subject title this morning is "Family with the Father" and we will concentrate on 1 John 1:1-10 to explain this.

This is a family letter from God the Father through John to His dear "*little children*" who are living in the world. The phrase "*little children*" is used nine times in John's letter (1 John 2:1, 2:12, 2:13, 2:18, 2:28, 3:7, 3:18, 4:4, 5:21). It's a tender word that is used here for "children", "*teknion*" in the Greek, it means "born ones" or "bairns". The word would also give the thought of "darlings," or someone "dearly loved." With the possible exception of the Song of Solomon, John's first letter is the most intimate of the writings of the Bible. Within God's family (that is everyone who has trusted in the Lord Jesus) the sin of a believer is treated as a child's offence against his Father, and is dealt with as a family matter (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1). The child's sin as an offence against the law has been met in the cross and "*Jesus Christ the righteous*" is now his "*Advocate with the Father.*" Advocate is just a fancy term for a lawyer, someone who pleads your case before the bar of justice. John writes, "*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 John 2:1). Jesus goes before God on our behalf and says, "Father, I know they are sinners, but they have repented and My blood has cleansed them. They belong to Me". So any sin we commit is forgiven within the family. I will explain this later.

John the Apostle was an old man when he wrote this letter from Ephesus probably between AD 90 and AD 110. There was false teaching around which denied that God had come in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Christians were also doubting their salvation. 1 John 5:13 says: "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*" Assurance of salvation is very important to a Christian; any doubt would harm our relationship with God the Father as well as with other believers.

A Christian has new spiritual life and this should be evident as he or she desires fellowship with God. This brings joy (1 John 1:4), a desire for holiness, for victory over sin (1 John 2:1-2) and the assurance of salvation. 1 John 1 and 1 John 2 focus on fellowship and contrast saying and doing. It is easy to talk as a Christian but not so easy to live it out in our lives. "*God is light*" (1 John 1:5) and His children should walk in His light. Light illuminates darkness and walking in God's pure light illuminates any sin in our lives. If you light a candle in a dark room the darkness is somewhat chased away. But if you illuminate the room completely there is no darkness at all, not even any dark corners. The same should be said for our lives.

Being a child of God is a remarkable privilege, but this brings great responsibility as to how we conduct our lives. Each one of us has a responsibility within our own families, because what we do reflects on our family. Some of our lives have more privilege than others and are played out in front of others. For example, the family of the Queen have more privileges and they therefore have more responsibility because of their relationship to the Queen, since what they do reflects on her. Relationships are very important to life in general, but particularly within families. It is wonderful to see families where there is a genuine respect for parents, and where you see a love and care for each other. God's family is no different and 1 John 1 speaks clearly about the relationship within the family.

Let us read the chapter together, 1 John 1:1-10:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear

witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

We are going to look at the chapter in three parts:

1. Living fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:1-3);
2. Joyful fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:4);
3. Honest fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:5-10).

1. Living fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:1-3)

John the writer of this letter, now an old man, begins by firstly telling us of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, speaking of the One who was from beginning. The Lord Jesus was and is the “*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last*” (Revelation 22:13). The Lord Jesus existed before time began. John was very close to Jesus when He was here on earth. In John 13:23 we find John, (although not mentioning his own name), speaks of a disciple leaning on Jesus’ bosom, a disciple whom Jesus loved. Jesus loved all His disciples, of course, but it seems that John had a very special close relationship to the Lord Jesus, maybe because he was the youngest of the disciples. John speaks in 1 John 1:1-3 of the living relationship he had with the Lord Jesus. John also recalls and bears witness of the times that he heard the Lord’s voice speaking to His own, and to the world. He saw the Lord with his own eyes, and many times I am sure John would have looked with love and admiration at the Lord. In fact, John goes on to mention the time that the Lord could say to Thomas “Reach out and touch My spear pierced side” (see John 20:24-29). By bearing testimony to these things, John was confirming the Lord’s deity, His manhood, His death and His resurrection.

When Jesus Christ came into this world He revealed what true life is. We cannot see Him today. We cannot touch Him today. But in the power of the Holy Spirit and by faith He can be real to us today. One of the purposes of the Lord as He came into this world was to reveal the Father’s heart of love to an undeserving world. The Lord speaks of His Father and Himself being one. The Lord also says that, “*He that has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9). So the living fellowship or relationship we can have with our Father is through the Lord Himself and because of His death.

You may be asking: “How can we have a relationship with a Father who is in Heaven?” The relationship we have now is by faith, God the Father wants us to draw close to Him and enjoy a divine relationship with Him. He wants us to know His heart; He wants us know what He thinks of His Son (see Matthew 22:42) and much more.

2. Joyful fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:4)

1 John 1:4 speaks of the joy of fellowship with the Father. John’s Gospel helps us to understand things as we read his letters. John 15:9-11 instructs us as to how we can be in the full enjoyment of this wonderful relationship. Let me read these verses with you: “*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*” God the Father wants us to bask in His love, a love that is constant without conditions and pure. The basis of the relationship between God the Father and you and me is not as a slave to a master. It’s more of a child to a parent. A child who is happy in the will of God is willing to serve. In a family where love and respect is evident there is joy. Children are willing do things for their parents even before they are asked. 1 John 1:4 is really the effect of adhering to the teachings of John 15. We shall return to it later.

3. Honest fellowship or relationship (1 John 1:5-10)

1 John 1:5-10 speak of the honesty we need to have within the family of God for us to really know this joyful fellowship. The Lord Jesus died for our sins and if we have put our faith and trust in Him, we have been cleansed from our sins. So we know that we are in a right standing before God. We have salvation which brings us from spiritual death into eternal life. But the crux of the matter is that, as we said at the beginning of the talk, God knows us through and through. God knew that while we are in this world we would still sin. When we sin, a barrier comes between us

and God our Father; the relationship is broken and needs fixing immediately. One thing we must be sure about is that God still loves us; that will never ever change.

Another thing to be sure about is that if we sin we will not lose our salvation. If one of your children is disobedient and does something that is against a rule you have made for the house, the effect of this is that the joy that there was between parent and child is interrupted. There is a coldness, a distance that comes between you. How is this fixed? By the child honestly repenting and confessing to the parent that did wrong and that they are sorry for being disobedient. The parent forgives and the joy in the relationship is restored. Sin interrupts but confession restores fellowship. God's family is the same. A Christian needs to honestly admit when he sins and confess and repent quickly.

1 John 1:5-7 speaks of the conditions of fellowship, the walk in the light. *"God is light"* (1 John 1:5), God's nature is light, pure light, perfect light; there is no darkness in Him whatsoever. John 3:19-21 help us to understand more of what this light represents. To walk in the light is to live in fellowship with the Father and the Son. When the Lord Jesus came into this world displaying the perfect character and truth of God, He exposed the darkness of sin in this world. John 3:19 says: *"And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

Fellowship with God is a matter of light, not darkness. Men who do evil deeds do them in the darkness where they cannot be seen or found out. Men who do righteous deeds, by contrast are happy to do them in the light. So to walk in fellowship with God our Father we must walk in His light. A godly character which every Christian should have does not develop in the darkness. It is impossible for a Christian to carry on with sin and have a clear conscience with God. You know what it's like!

If we sin we know it's wrong and we are very uneasy until we confess it. How does it affect us? I am sure I don't need to tell you!

- We don't feel like praying;
- We don't feel like reading our Bible;
- We don't want to go out to church;
- We are uncomfortable as we meet with other Christians.

Proverbs 4:18 is a great verse: *"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."* We should, I say should, be walking daily in the presence of the Lord, with our will and conscience in the light, judging everything that does not answer to that light. If something is not right we should immediately bring it to the Lord so that it is judged and put away. God demands this for true fellowship with Him.

1 John 1:7 goes on to tell us that if we are walking in this blissful light the result is that we also have happy mutual fellowship with other believers. 1 John 1:8 confirms that believers have two natures, one that answers to sin and one that does not. We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, giving us God's nature which, of course, is perfect. But we also have our old human nature which can sin and well we know it! If we deny that we can sin, it's a delusion. We will unfortunately always have the ability to sin until the moment we are called to be with the Lord in heaven; then we will be perfect, unable to sin. Thankfully we have a wonderful God who is faithful and righteous and has made provision knowing that we would sin.

1 John 1:9 is a key verse for the believer in Christ, a verse that every believer should know off by heart: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Thank God for this verse! As a Christian living in this world with dual natures we cannot be perfect. We do sin but by confessing our sins we are forgiven and we are cleansed from these sins. We need to deal honestly with our sins. There is a great danger that as we sin our conscience becomes immune to certain sins. In other words, we almost convince ourselves that there is no harm in what we have done. This is dangerous! Our consciences can become seared!

If we look at things in the light of God, we will clearly see that any tiny sin we commit, whether we think it, speak it or do it, is abhorrent to God. Remember God's standard is absolute sinless perfection because God hates sin. I know that we can never meet these standards; that's why this verse is so important. Maybe you get down because you sin, but don't despair it happens and God understands! It's different if we continue doing the same sins all the time; 1 John 1:9 does **not** give the believer the freedom to sin as he pleases. Remember God cannot look on sin (see Habakkuk 1:13).

Once we confess our sins we must believe that God has forgiven them as He has promised. The fellowship between us and God is restored and we feel free to spend time in the Father's presence once more. Remember God the Father regards us as children who are happy to do what He asks rather than a slave master demands obedience. Our

relationship with God should be of mutual love. God's unchanging love and our response to that love which should be a willingness to please God. God is looking for His children to be blameless before men and God.

Daniel was a great example of someone who lived a righteous life, a blameless life walking in the light of God and no one could point a finger at him (see Daniel 6:4-5). He decided in his heart when he was young he would walk righteously before God. You can please God and be a clear shining light in this world. Others will see it and it could lead to their blessing! 1 John 1:10 again underlines that if we claim we have not sinned we make God out to be a liar.

Being a child of God and having a Father who loves us and cares for us is really special. I pray that this talk today will help you to draw near to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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