

1 John Chapter 2

1. As a child, were you afraid of the dark? What "monsters" were in it that scared you? 2. What was your parents' standard line (as a teenager) when you went out for an evening?

INTRODUCTION

The second chapter of 1 John opens with an affectionate introduction: 'My little children...' As an old man, John is very tender with the younger believers (some of whom could be his converts) and in spite of the heresy which was taking some of them by storm, he did not scold them. He showed great understanding and maturity. His purpose in writing was to prevent them from sinning- living a life-style that feels at home with works of darkness. He had said, God is light and when we walk in the light, we have fellowship with Him. John continues this theme and in verse 3 he says that we know God when we keep his commandments, which is the same as walking in the light. He reiterates in verse 6 that those who claim to abide in God must live the same kind of life as Jesus lived. Our knowing God and having fellowship with Him, then, is bound up with obeying Him and living according to his revealed truth in Christ.

Read 1 John 2: 1-14

Questions for discussion

1. Practically, what does it mean to "walk in the light" and not in "darkness"?

2. If light and love are linked with darkness and hate (1:6; 2:9-11), what does that imply about relating to God? About growing spiritually?

3. What hope does John give when people fail to live in light of God's love? (1:9; 2:1-2)_____

Whether in the elder's century or our own, the church is not an assemblage of spiritually healthy people; the church is where the sick gather to be healed from the disease of sin. Christians have been tempted to regard the early church as a golden age of purity, which, were it only recovered could restore Christianity to its original flawlessness. Such nostalgic myopia is corrected by John's letters. It is not that we are so lamentably different from our forebears in faith; in fact, we resemble them far too closely. John is determined to lay it down unequivocally that the only way in which we can show that we know God is by obedience to him, and the only way we can show that we have union with Christ is by imitation of him. Christianity offers a lot of privileges and also the greatest obligation.

Question 4.

In verses 1b and 2, Jesus Christ is called "The one who speaks to the Father in our defense" (advocate), "The Righteous One", and "the atoning sacrifice" (propitiation) for our sins. What is the implication of these offices and names to our faith?

Comment

An advocate represents you not to cheat the system but because he/she is better able to speak for you than you are. The advocate understands you and your case better than you do. Jesus, as our advocate, stands in our place and speaks on our behalf. As "the righteous" one, he is not a slick lawyer trying to get us off, giving no heed to justice or having to manipulate or cheat the justice system. Our advocate with the Father is the one who is righteous or in right relationship with the Father and with us. And Jesus doesn't just expiate our sins, i.e. separate us from them, turn us away from them, he Himself is the expiation for our sins. He is the atoning sacrifice –the penalty for our sins.

5. What are the characteristic features of those who know Christ?

6. Why does John say the commandment is not new but old (v7), then apparently reverse himself in the very next sentence(v8)?

7. What is meant by the truth of this command is seen in him and in you?

Comment

John speaks about a commandment which is at one and the same time old and new. John must have been thinking of the words of Jesus in (John 13:34)- "I give you a new commandment that you love..." It was old in the sense that this was not the first time that John's hearers heard it. (Read Leviticus 19:18). Its newness derives from how Jesus raises it to a completely new standard, in terms of its reach and the lengths to which it would go. We can abide in Christ, live in Christ, know the truth about ourselves and our complete inadequacy to save ourselves and yet not be crushed by it, because Christ has done all that is necessary to truly abide with us and share His life with us and make us more and more able to receive that life. Why wouldn't I then want to turn and abide in Him when He is working to accomplish His purposes for me?

8. Why do you think John called his readers "my children" in verse 1 and "dear friends" in verse 7?

Comment

John is telling them that this is the truth of who they are. It is not spoken of as a potential or a goal, but a reality. We are beloved...by God!!! This is the good news. The God who is light loves us, we are His beloved. We begin here, we are not trying to arrive there. John is helping his beloved readers to see how what he is writing relates to the revelations of God that went before.

Love and hate, light and dark (verses 9-11)

9. How does John see personal relationships in this passage and, is indifference possible?_____

10. Discuss how we regard other people as: Negligible, nuisance, enemies, with contempt etc _____

Comment

John is helping his readers to uncover more of what it means to live in God's light instead of the darkness. John is saying that when we abide in Christ, there is an effect on our relationships with others. Our fellowship with God is intimately connected with how we view others. Now why is that? Well, who are we abiding in? Christ. And He is the first one who truly loves God and His brothers--us! In Him, God and humanity are brought together. Jesus loves His heavenly Father and He loves us, His sisters and brothers. Jesus sees and knows and loves us--sees us clearly in our sin and darkness and loves us and rescues us to live in His life and light and to be made more and more like Him and like the sisters and brothers we were created to be.

In hating our brother, we fail to recognize that we are the same--both able to live and be redeemed and transformed only by the gracious action of God. To love our brother is to see in him/her the same good news that Jesus can break through the darkness with His light. This doesn't mean that there aren't times when we struggle with great anger and hate toward others. And it doesn't mean that we have to be absolute best buddies with everyone we meet. It goes beyond feelings. To hate our brother is to reject him, to fail to see God's love and commitment to that person, and to fail to hope for them to be filled with God's life just as we hope for that for ourselves.

11. In verses 12-14 describe in your own words what we are and what we are assured of in Jesus Christ? What marks each stage of maturity described in these verses?