



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

**3...our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ...6** If we say, 'We have **fellowship with him,**' & yet we walk in darkness, we are lying & are not practicing the truth. **7** If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, & the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say, '**We have no sin,**' we are deceiving ourselves, & the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful & righteous to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say, '**We have not sinned,**' we make him a liar, & his word is not in us. **1** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you **may not sin. But if anyone does sin,** we have **an advocate** with the Father – Jesus Christ **the righteous one.** **2** He himself is **the atoning sacrifice** for our sins, & not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world. (1Jn. 1:3, 6-2:2)

### 1. Sin Affects Our Fellowship With God (1:3, 6-10)

- a. We have entered into fellowship (communion, or active participation) with God (v. 3)
- b. Our sin affects our fellowship (communion, or active participation) with God (vv. 6-10)
  - a. Self-deception
  - b. Denial of sin
    - a. "Obviously sin is not a popular subject in our day. **People will go to great lengths to hide it, rationalize it, or deny it. But we must understand that when they deny their sin they call God a liar.** They challenge His Word & question His character. They say sin is not serious & Jesus did not need to die...[One theologian] once said, 'I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. I think Jesus came to show us something about life. . . I don't think we need people hanging on crosses & blood dripping & weird stuff.' In one sense she is right: **if we have no sin then we have no need of a Savior.**" (Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John*, p. 26)
- c. How do we maintain our fellowship (communion, or active participation) with God? (vv. 7b, 9)
  - a. "**He is still our Father even if we sin.** This reminds us of the blessed truth that **though sin in a believer's life breaks fellowship, it does not break relationship.** When a person is born again, he becomes a child of God. God is henceforth his Father, & nothing can ever affect that relationship. A birth is something that cannot be undone. A son may disgrace his father, but he is still a son by the fact of birth." (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2311)

- d. What maintaining fellowship with God is not:
- Penance
  - Tipping the scales from bad to good
  - Praying to the saints
2. Believers Understanding Rightly God's Provision (2:1-2)
- Believers are the focus of John's words (2:1a) – 'My little children'
    - "**My little children**...establishes his affection for his readers, while yet maintaining his authority to instruct them as someone older & wiser in the faith..." (Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1, 2, & 3 John*, p. 103)
    - "This [section] continues the topic of sin that was introduced in 1:5–10, but moves the discussion from the more general level of 'if we say...' to a more personal, direct address to 'my little children'. This term occurs several times within the letter, most often in discussions involving the fatherhood of God. It may reflect Jesus' use of the same term in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13:33)." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 100)
    - "A new tone is introduced by addressing the readers as 'my little children', & this will be a common address from this point forward (2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21)...Believers are no longer addressed as a shapeless collective 'you,' but are now addressed in a term used by the Johannine Jesus when he addresses his disciples at 13:33...And yet despite these shifts in tone the concerns & content of the argument continue to be the same, especially regarding the sins of believers & the work of Jesus." (George L. Parsenius, *Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament: 1, 2, 3 John*, pp. 63-4)
  - An admonition not to sin (2:1a)
    - "John...had to make it quite clear that his purpose was that Christians should not sin. Unconfessed sin was incompatible with fellowship with God. John's aim, therefore, was that his readers would both recognize their sin & confess it..." (I. Howard Marshall, *NICNT: The Epistles of John*, p. 122)
    - "Sin is a besetting reality for the church, but it is certainly not the author's objective to instill within his readers a sense of paralysis by their abysmal potential for depravity. Rather, he writes these things 'so that you may not [commit] sin' (v. 1)..." (C. Clifton Black, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Vol. X, p. 812)
    - "...sin is of the Devil (3:8-9). Even though no Christian can ever claim to have completely conquered sin in his or her life (1:8,10), the goal of every Christian in every situation should be to resist sin in that moment." (Jim Shaddix, *Explore the Bible Commentary: 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation*, p. 26)
  - If anyone does sin (2:1b)
    - "The purpose of God's forgiveness is to prompt those who experience it not to repeat the wrongs of the past. But John's wisdom also leads him to acknowledge immediately the reality that 'someone' will likely sin...In the case of someone sinning, his overarching purpose to reassure his readers that they have eternal life (5:13) comes into play." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 103-4)
    - "if anyone does sin.' John could be sure that, even though his goal was a sinless life for his readers, they would, in fact, sin. Earlier John had stated that forgiveness was based on the work of Jesus (1:7) & the character of God (1:9). Here John further unpacked that truth: Jesus is our advocate...for our sins (2:2)." (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 26)
    - "...The Lord knows...we are dust, & so he has graciously made provision for us in the event of failure." (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2311)
  - 'We have' – present tense = Jesus is presently & continually doing something 4 us!
3. God's three-fold provision – Reassurance if one should sin (2:1c-2)
- "The central truth of the Christian gospel is that God has revealed himself in the sacrificial death of his Son, which atones for the evil, immoral behavior of people – our sin." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 108-9)
  - "There is every hope that believers will not sin, but God has provided Jesus in order to deal with the reality of sin." (George L. Parsenius, *Op Cit*, pp. 63-4)
  - "Three labels are given to Jesus in 2:1–2 that explain his work in relation to the sins of human beings: *parakle?ton, dikaion, hilasmos*. The second term, *dikaion*, means "just" or "righteous" & is the one most easy to explain in this context. To call Jesus "just" here is to call him merciful & to emphasize his desire to save – not destroy – those who sin. At 1:9 God was called just, & then it was immediately said that God will forgive sins & cleanse sinners from all injustice. To call God just does not imply that he eradicates sinners, but that he forgives them. The same point is now made here of Jesus. If anyone commits sin, Jesus is standing in the presence of the Father in order to accomplish this very same work of mercy & forgiveness of sins." (George L. Parsenius, *Op Cit*, p. 64)

## d. Jesus Christ the Advocate

- a. *"In seeking to understand the meaning of parakle?tos in this verse, it is helpful to begin with the meaning of the word in the ancient Hellenistic texts...the parakle?tos is consistently portrayed as an advocate, one who speaks on behalf of the accused (not in the professional sense we use it today, but as a friend...who speaks in favor of the accused)...In a similar fashion, in 1 John Jesus functions as our parakle?tos, speaking up on our behalf in the presence of his Father when we sin."* (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit*, pp. 64-5)
- b. *"In 1 John, Jesus performs only one function as Paraclete...a defending advocate for the believers...an intercessor with the Father on behalf of believers."* (George L. Parsenius, *Op Cit*, pp. 64-5)
- c. *"[In 1 John] it is the unique status of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for sin (2:2) that is the basis of his advocacy for sinners, which therefore provides consolation for anyone who sins."* (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 104-5)
- d. *"An advocate is one who comes to the side of another person in time of need in order to help. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus does for us when we sin. He immediately comes to us in order to restore us to fellowship with himself."* (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2311)

## e. Advocate with the Father

- a. *"There is something very wonderful in this verse which we should not overlook. It says, 'But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father.' It does not say 'with God,' but rather 'with the Father.' He is still our Father even if we sin. This reminds us of the blessed truth that though sin in a believer's life breaks fellowship, it does not break relationship. When a person is born again, he becomes a child of God. God is henceforth his Father, & nothing can ever affect that relationship. A birth is something that cannot be undone. A son may disgrace his father, but he is still a son by the fact of birth."* (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2311)

## e. Jesus Christ the righteous one

- a. *"[It] would seem that ['the righteous one'] is used in the present context to indicate that the one who has acted righteously is the one who now stands in the presence of the Father to speak on behalf of those who have not acted righteously."* (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 78)

## f. Jesus Christ the atoning sacrifice for our sins

- a. *"1 John[s] view...the death of Christ is understood as an offering to God for sin...In this context, too, the author can speak of Jesus' blood as a 'cleansing' & a 'taking away' of sins (1 Jn. 1:7; 3:5)."* (Robert Kysar, 1, 2, 3 John, p. 21)
- b. *"...what the author meant by saying that Jesus Christ is 'the atoning sacrifice for our sins' in 2:2...have to be sought within the immediate context. And the idea of the atoning sacrifice here is in juxtaposition with the idea of advocacy. Jesus is...pleading for mercy for sinners [as our Advocate], & this in turn suggests that his role as the atoning sacrifice is to secure that mercy..."* (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit*, pp. 65-6)
- c. *"If & when someone sins, our advocate is someone who has standing with the Father, the righteous Jesus Christ, because he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins."* (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 105)
- d. *"In 1 John 2:1-2, Jesus is called both our paraclete & our hilasmos. The meaning of this distinctive combination is to be found in Jewish thought, not Hellenistic. If a Christian sins, his or her otherwise good works cannot function as the paraclete before the Father. Only Jesus Christ, who died to atone for sin & who lives to intercede & mediate our petition for forgiveness, can fill that role."* (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 106)

## e. An expression of God's love (1 Jn. 4:10; Jn. 3:16)

- a. *"Throughout the history of the church, theologians have struggled to articulate a theory of atonement that adequately includes all the New Testament material. In distinction from the Christus Victor that atonement is achieved by Christ's victory over evil (cf. 1 Pet 3:22), or...the view that Christ's death appeases God's anger (cf. Rom 1:18), John's writings present Christ as a replacement for animal sacrifice in the temple...However, atonement for sin in John's thought is not a reference to God's anger, but to his love (4:10). In Johannine thought, the cross is the exaltation of Jesus & the clearest expression of God's love."* (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 105-6)
- b. *"1 John...characteriz[es] Jesus...as a sacrifice of atonement (or reconciliation) between human beings & God, by which sinners are cleansed of their sins. (1:7, 9). The implied disposition of God toward human beings is one of merciful love, not displeasure that must be placated...Accordingly, atonement is...an expression of God's love which removes sin from the sinner."* (C. Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 813)
- c. *"God is no vindictive tyrant, eager to punish, but the loving heavenly father to whom self acknowledged sinners may repair. 'It is very important,' said Calvin, 'to be quite sure that when we have sinned there is a reconciliation with God ready & prepared for us. Otherwise we shall always carry hell about within...[for] hell reigns where there is no peace with God.'" (C. Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 816)*

## f. Sacrifice for sin is not in John's Gospel

- a. *"In the Fourth Gospel the death of Christ...is not a sacrifice for the expiation of sin."* (CH. Dodd, "First Epistle of John &... 4th Gospel," BJRL, V. 21 (1937) pp. 144-5)
- b. *"...the Gospel of John,...never clearly articulates a sacrificial view of the cross."* (Robert Kysar, *Op Cit*, p. 21)
- c. *"It does not seem necessary...to think of expiation or atonement for sins is in view in the Johannine huper passages [Jn. 6:51; 10:11, 15]...John has not developed the notion of atonement or expiation in the huper passages & any such notion must be read into these passages by appeal to non-Johannine passages such as Gal. 1:4."* (Martinus C. Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus*, p. 234)

- d. "There are...some passages in the Gospel [of John] which have been taken to suggest that Jesus' death is an atoning... sacrifice... [However,] **none of these passages mention blood & sin, or make an easily discernible claim that Jesus' death is to be understood as an atoning...blood sacrifice.** If this idea lies in the background, it remains in the background." (Martinus C. Boer, *Op Cit*, pp. 276-7)
- e. "Did John see Jesus' death as atonement for sin? ...The problem is that for many centuries Christian scholars have sought to harmonize the various NT writings... to discover a consistent theology of sin & redemption. All too often **it's been assumed that John must have the same message as other Scripture writers.** There's no doubt that Paul's writings, 1 Peter, 1 John & Revelation all interpret Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin. This is illustrated by their use of such terms as hilasterion & hilasmos ('propitiation' or 'expiation'), lutoo & lutrosis ('redeem', 'redemption') & the image of Jesus as the slain lamb. In interpreting Jesus' death in this way...[they] were applying... the idea common to Judaism...that blood-sacrifice is necessary as a means of reconciling humanity to God. **John's Gospel does not use the language of 'redemption' or 'expiation/propitiation** (though 1 John does: 1:7, 9; 2:2); it is, however, beyond doubt that its author is familiar with such ideas..." (Ruth B. Edwards, *Discovering John*, p. 94)
- f. "The parallels to First John's understanding of Jesus' death in other NT documents...suggest the influence of traditions from non-Johannine forms of Christianity... If so, 1 John's understanding of Jesus' death perhaps **did not emerge (at least directly) from elements in the Johannine tradition itself.**" (Martinus C. Boer, *Op Cit*, p. 276)
- g. "In the Gospel there are **statements about the removal of sin** by the death of Jesus, but these are clearly '**secondary**' ('**minor**') elements...But what does 1 John say about this?... The author of 1 John is convinced that the death of Jesus was much more than a departure to the Father. [He] uses a variety of terms to describe...the **death of Jesus as an atonement... his blood is an atonement for sin.**" (Urban C. von Wahlde, "Brown's View...of 1 John," in RA. Culpepper (ed.) *Communities in Dispute*, p. 41)
- h. "**Atonement terminology...[is] absent from John's Gospel.** Neither can it be assumed that references... in 1 John (2:2; 4:10) should function as an interpretive lens for the Gospel [of John]..." (Catrin Williams, "'Seeing,' Salvation, &... Scripture in...John," in M. Botner (ed.) *Atonement*, pp.) "There have been two main lines of interpretation of Jesus' death in the Fourth Gospel. **One reads it in the light of Paul & concludes that Jesus dies as an atoning sacrifice.** The other interprets it in the light of the [Fourth] Gospel's emphasis on revelation & concludes that **Jesus' death is but the completion of his entire life work, that is, the crowning part of the revelation imparted in the Incarnation** (e.g., Gail O'Day, *John*, pp. 663-5)." (Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John*, p. 255)
- g. The death of Christ in John's Gospel points to his exaltation & giving us eternal life
- a. "In the Fourth Gospel **the death of Christ is first & foremost that by which Christ is 'glorified' or 'exalted'**, & by virtue of which he 'draws' all [people] into the sphere of eternal life." (CH. Dodd, "First Epistle of John &...4th Gospel," *BJRL*, V. 21 (1937) pp. 144-5)
- b. "The vocabulary of redemption & expiation is completely absent from the Gospel [of John]." (J.T. Forestell)
- c. "**Jesus' death provides for eternal life & other benefits for believers in the Gospel [of John], but it does not atone for sin.**" (Jeffrey A. Trumbower)
- h. "John does not tell us how substitutionary atonement works in terms of 'taking away' or 'removing' sin...**John makes no direct mention of the sin offering.** 'It is characteristic of **this Gospel [of John]...that the emphasis of the passage [6:51-54] falls not on Christ's death for sin, but on his death for life**' (Beasley-Murray)." (Bruce R. Reichenbach, *Diving into the Gospel of John*, p. 258)
- a. For the sins of the whole world (1 Jn. 4:14-15)
- b. "John made clear the universal scope of Jesus' atoning work...However, **the universal sufficiency of Jesus' death does not guarantee the individual salvation of everyone in the world.** John's Gospel & his letter make it abundantly clear that **salvation requires a response of faith** (John 3:16; 1 John 5:4-5)." (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 28)
- c. "In the ancient world, the gods were parochial & had geographically limited jurisdictions. In the mountains, one sought the favor of the mountain gods; on the sea, of the sea gods. Ancient warfare was waged in the belief that the gods of the opposing nations were fighting as well, & the outcome would be determined by whose god was strongest. Against that kind of pagan mentality, **John asserts that the efficacy of Jesus Christ's sacrifice is valid everywhere, for people everywhere, that is, 'the whole world.'** The Christian gospel knows no geographic, racial, ethnic, national, or cultural boundaries." (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 106-7)
- d. "That Jesus offered the atoning sacrifice 'for the sins of the whole world' **cannot mean that all people's sins are automatically forgiven so that all are the inheritors of eternal life, even if they do not believe in the name of the Son of God...** Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world **because his death was sufficient to deal with the sins of the whole world, but that his sacrifice does not become effective until people believe in him.**" (Colin Kruse, *Op Cit*, pp. 66-7)