

God's Family

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 March 2020

Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back now to 1 John and chapter 2 and at the beginning of the chapter. 1 John 2 and at verse 1.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is a propitiation for our sins and not for us only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And so on.

As we read the Bible, the Word of God, we see that God in different ways describes his people. Very much in the Old Testament, the people of God are the kingdom of God.

We come into the New Testament and the people of God are disciples. They are the church of God called out by Jesus to follow him.

[1 : 0 2] And in these different ways, the Word of God describes the church of God to us. Who are Christian believers? What are they like? And how are they connected to the Lord and to the Lord Jesus?

It's clear as we read the first letter of John that his favorite idea with regard to the church is that of God's family. And we know as those who have families, we understand that there is a warmth, a tenderness and a care that we enjoy and experience in a family life and in family atmosphere.

That's where we are nurtured. That's where we experience the goodness of God. It's a place where we enjoy love. And down through this letter, John is addressing those who are the children of God, those who are his own children, with the simple desire that they will know Jesus and have eternal life.

But as we read through the letter, we do realize something that we see across the world in which we live. That is, we realize that this family is in some ways dysfunctional.

We look across the world and we see a society that is in many ways itself dysfunctional. It's not functioning in the way that it ought to.

[2 : 3 1] It's not functioning in the way that God designed it to function. And because of that, it results in chaos. Whether it is in society morally or society politically or spiritually, there is so much dysfunction in the world that creates chaos for us every day.

And nowhere is that of greater damage to the witness of the church of Jesus than when that dysfunction takes place within the church of Jesus itself.

And we see through this letter that there are three particular things that show that this family, this church of Jesus, is functioning the way that it should.

They're very simple. The first one is, with regard to our knowledge of Jesus, that we recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord and the Son of God has come into the world.

The second thing is very practical, that we love each other. And the third thing is also very practical, that we live as we should live, that we live a life devoted to God and to Jesus.

[3 : 47] These are the three marks of a functioning family of God in the world. And in some ways, as we read through this letter, these are the things that were threatened and that were missing.

And I want us to think about that today, not just collectively, but perhaps especially personally. What's our own relationship with God like?

How does it function? Does it function at all? Or is there some kind of chaos in our lives? Because a relationship with God and a relationship with the Lord Jesus does not exist or has ceased to operate the way that it should.

Personal, collective, but especially personal. And the aim of John through these verses and through these chapters is to correct that.

Is to help people adjust their lives and to take care so that they are living their lives with their focus on Jesus and with a faith exercised as it should, trusting in Him.

[5 : 03] I want us to think, first of all, that we have in this passage a family conversation. Families just cannot operate unless we're conversing with each other.

We must be talking to each other. And when we look at the family conversation that's taking place here, it has to do with a dysfunction in the family that's because of the presence of sin.

And we read from verse 8 in chapter 1 and that's what we see. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. In chapter 3, John reminds us that sin is lawlessness.

The conversation has to be about our sin and our sinnership. And that sin can be present in a variety of ways.

It can be present, first of all, simply in the way that I just don't believe. I refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus. That's the great sin that we refuse and we reject the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 15] The other possibility for sin is that we allow sin to interrupt our relationship with the Lord Jesus. And in our hearts we can perhaps know what that feels like.

If it happens in our families outwardly, there is a breakdown. There is a breakdown in communication. Sin causes an interruption in my relationship with my Savior.

And sin also causes a change in my lifestyle. That it brings about a life of disobedience. I lose my course.

I lose my path. I lose my way. I am no longer living the way that the Lord Jesus wants me to live. And as we read through this passage again, we see that in different ways, people just do not accept their sinnership.

They do not accept that they have sinned. And that's the problem. From verse 6, if we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

[7 : 26] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we say we have no sin, we make Him a liar. You see the seriousness of this issue to do with your sin and with my sin.

I can stick my head in the sand and pretend I don't have sin. I'm deceiving myself. I can say I have no sin. I am actually accusing God of being a liar.

Not only am I denying the truth, which is serious enough, but I am calling God to be a liar. I don't believe what God is saying to me.

He is not telling me the truth. And that's a deception that Satan will use repeatedly in your mind and in mine. He will persuade you that the truth is that you don't have sin.

And once he persuades you of that, it's your rejection of the truth that says you are a sinner and you have sinned. And today, all of us together, all of us individually and personally have to embrace our sinnership, have to recognize that God in His Word tells you and me that no one is righteous, no one is perfect, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

[8 : 52] And at the very outset of this time of worship, you and I must ask ourselves, what do we think about our sin?

It is certainly true that intellectually, when I hear the Word of God saying that am I a sinner intellectually, I can say, yes, I accept that. That is a fact.

But nevertheless, I can go on from accepting that fact without any change in my life. I'm down through the centuries and the generations of the church of Jesus.

That has always been the case. There are those who will come to the gospel. They come because they say they are sinners and they believe Jesus is a Savior and they go away and there is no change.

Their intellectual acceptance of their sinnership does not descend any deeper into their beings. There is no evident change. And I'm sure there's no one in this building today who will say that they are not sinners.

[9 : 57] Otherwise, you wouldn't be here. Intellectually, you agree with what the Word of God says. But how deep does that go? How does this family function?

How do Christians have a conversation? What is the family conversation? And here it is. In verse 9.

If we confess our sins. Admitting that we have done wrong, it certainly means that.

But it means a lot more than that. It means that I'm taking the truth of God that speaks into my sinnership and I'm embracing that truth and I'm taking ownership of my sin.

I have sinned. And as David says in Psalm 51, I have sinned against God. But my confession must go deeper than that. And it must go to the extent to which I'm embracing not what I think of my sin.

[11 : 03] But what God thinks of my sin. And the very concept of confession is saying the same thing as God about my sin. And that's a huge development in your life and in mine.

If we go from having just an intellectual acceptance of our sinnership. To come to God with hearts that embrace exactly what he says about my sin.

That we're saying the same things as God about our sin. A major development. It's a child coming to the Father.

The child who has done wrong. Who has seriously offended the Father. It's him coming to the Father. And recognizing what the Father thinks of the offense and of the sin.

And using that description and saying to the Father. That yes, what I've done wrong is exactly the way that you describe it.

[12 : 12] I don't understand the seriousness of it myself. Without your words, I couldn't do that. But with your words now, I understand what my sin is. And I come to you because there is in my heart that living relationship with you.

That needs to be revived and refreshed. And that can only take place when this issue of what I've done wrong is resolved. And what a turnaround it would be for you and for me today.

If there is any sense of dysfunction in the relationship with God. If there is an absence of trusting, living relationship with the Lord Jesus. That we would come to this point.

And hear the words of God. And say the words of God back to him. As someone has said, there is nothing that God has pleasure in more.

Than hearing his own words spoken back to him. Will you today take the word of God. And take it into your heart.

[13 : 29] And recognize that the God who is described in the Old Testament. As the one who is of pure eyes. And to look upon evil. And sin. That against that God.

That you have committed sin. You have broken his law. As his word says. Come with that confession. But I think of.

The child coming into the room. With his head down in shame. Coming to his father to confess his wrongdoing. Why should he do that?

Why would he do that? Why would he not run in fear away from the very person that he has offended? Why would he not want to be as much distance as possible.

From the father whom he has wronged. For the simple reason. That he knows his father.

[14 : 35] He knows his father's character. He knows his father's practice. He knows his father's behavior. And he knows that when he comes with the confession of his sin.

He's going to meet with someone. That's ready to receive. And that's exactly what we see in verse 9. If we confess our sins. He is faithful.

And just to forgive us our sins. And to cleanse us. From all unrighteousness. He is faithful.

He is just. He is forgiving. And he restores and makes us new. Everything that the child has need of.

The father has proclaimed his forgiveness. That if we do confess. That he will. Not only wash away our uncleanness.

[15 : 37] But lift away our sin. And in the Old Testament. There is a marvelous image. Of the way in which God puts a distance between us and our sin.

And in Leviticus chapter 16. On the day of atonement. When the sacrifice was given. And blood was shed. To cover the sins of the people of Israel.

The sins were symbolically laid on the scapegoat. That was taken into a far off place. From which he was never going to return.

The sins were lifted off the people. Were placed on the scapegoat. And they were carried away. Never again to come back to this people. And here is the forgiveness.

That comes when the father receives. And hears the child. Confessing his or her sin. That in that moment of confession. He has promised. To lift the sin.

[16 : 37] And to lift the guilt. And to lift it in such a way. As to separate it from the person confessing. So that it never again. Returns.

To spoil this relationship. We read in Psalm 32. The way in which. David felt his bones were wasting away.

Do you know what it's like. When we do something wrong. And we're not confessing it. There's not only guilt on our consciences. That we feel burdened and heavy.

It robs us of our energy. And of our life. And we struggle on. And so we'll do. Until such a time. As we come to confession. He remained silent.

And life was a slug. He struggled every day to live. Until he came and confessed. And the family conversation here.

[17 : 38] Brings us to that place. Where the child is motivated. And inspired. By the faithful. Trustworthy.

Father. Who is just. Remarkably just. In forgiving sin. And restoring. The relationship. The family conversation.

It's a return. To order. It's a restoring. Of the way in which. This family functioned. And a restoration. That washes and kinds away.

Every thing. That spoiled. The relationship. And. There is a beauty. On both sides of forgiveness.

There is nothing. Quite. Like. Forgiving. True forgiveness. Mess our hearts.

[18 : 39] If we are giving it. And there is nothing like. Being forgiven. Because. It melts our hearts. When we are forgiven. And.

At the risk of. Of. Bringing things into the experience of God. That. Perhaps. We should not. I think it's fair to say. That God has. Huge delight.

And God has great pleasure. In giving forgiveness to us. When we come to him. And that. Pleasure. And that delight. Finds an echo.

In our own hearts. Because. We are melted. By his love. We are overcome. By. The greatness. And the majesty. Of the way. In which. He is able to embrace us.

Despite. What we have done. Against him. And. It's at that point. When the conversation. Is silenced. Not because.

[19 : 36] It. Was meaningless. But because. It was meaningful. And it came to an end. Because. Everything in the conversation. Was. Overcome.

And overwhelmed. By a sense. Of the greatness. Of the love of God. The family conversation. Shouldn't we all.

Come together today. To that place. Before God. And discover. That for ourselves. To come with words. That will. Ultimately.

Leave us speechless. Adoring. The greatness. Of God. The majesty. Of his love. And the way. In which. He. Washes away.

For every. Sin. The family. Conversation. Secondly. We see.

[20 : 30] That there is. A family. Connection. And the family. Connection. Arises. From the fact. That there is.

A key person. In this family. And we may think. That. The key person. Is the father. Father. But as far as. The forgiveness.

Is concerned. The key person. Is. The son. In verse 1. Of chapter 2. My little children. I am writing these things. To you. So that you may not sin.

But if anyone. Does sin. We have. An advocate. With the father. Jesus Christ. The righteous. At one level.

The advocate. Is the helper. He comes. Alongside. To help us. In the family. Child. Kind of.

[21 : 25] Context. The image. Is coming. To take the child. By their hand. And taking them. To the place. Where. Where the conversation. Has to take place. It's. The helper.

In that sense. But it is. More on the helper. It is. The person. Who comes. As. As the legal. Advisor. Who comes.

Into. The. The. Law court. To represent me. To take up. My case. He does that. On my behalf. I don't have the words.

I don't have the understanding. I don't have the understanding. Of. Of my sin. I don't have the understanding. Of God's law. I don't have the understanding. Of what God requires. I need. An advocate.

Someone who is familiar. With all of the detail. Of God's law. Someone who is familiar. With all the detail. Of the process. Of God's law court. And who will take up. My case for me.

[22 : 20] In that. Context. And. That's the marvel. Of. Of. The way. And. Of the location. Which we find. This advocate. We have.

An advocate. With. The father. And. The father. And. We might. Think. Today. That. The greatest.

Help. We need. Is right. Where we are. And. In many ways. That's true. We need. The help. Of the spirit. Of God. Of the spirit. Of Jesus Christ.

Where we are. To help us. With words. To help us. With conversation. To help us. With worship. Our greatest. Need. In that sense. Is to have someone. Here. With us. And God.

Has promised that. To us. His presence. Will be with us. Forever. His spirit. Will be in our hearts. Our greatest. Need. Is to have. Someone. With us.

[23 : 17] But there is. One need. That surpasses. That. In its greatness. And it is. The need. That we have. To have someone. To represent us.

In the throne room. Of God. Where God. Carries out. His government. Where God. Makes his rules.

Where God. Decides. Who are his children. The place. From which. God's. Strategy. For salvation. Comes from. The place.

Where God. Sits. And looks. Down. Upon the world. And sees. Every individual. In it. The place. From which. God reigns. That today.

God. In his. Might. And in his. Power. And his. Great wisdom. As I pointed. That for you. And for me. There is.

[24 : 13] An advocate. At his right hand. And that he is there. As the one. Who lives forever. Says the writer. To the Hebrews. To make intercession. For us. To plead. Our case. Before God.

God. And the marvel of. Part of the marvel of that. Is. The words that were read. In Psalm number 21. That this advocate.

Never fails. There is never a case. Which is not proven. There is never a case. Which is thrown out of court. He is. An advocate.

He is someone. Who represents me. And he is. Always successful. Successful. God. Says the psalmist. Will not withhold. From him.

Anything. That he asks. In Psalm 21. What a privilege. What an honor. We have today. As we worship God. Through the Lord.

[25 : 08] Jesus Christ. That that same. Lord Jesus Christ. Is not only on our side. But he is in heaven. For us. As we come with our sin. And he is taking up.

Our case. And he will be successful. As he does so. And as we come in our conversation. To confess our sin. He takes it all up.

Into the throne room of God. And there. He has. A family conversation. A family conference.

It's a conference in heaven. About you and I. Down here in the world. In the light of. The crisis that sin has brought. Into our experience. The dysfunction.

That has left us. Separate from God. There is. A conference. In heaven. Between the father. And the son.

[26 : 04] And in. Today. If I want somebody. To represent me. I want somebody. With. A good reputation.

I want somebody. That I can rely on. In whom. I can put my complete trust. That he will carry out. Everything on my behalf.

And here we have. The advocate. Who is Jesus Christ. The righteous. Everything. About his reputation. Makes it.

Makes him suitable. For my case. He is Jesus. The son of God. He came into the world. Jesus. Who walked the face of the earth. Jesus of Nazareth.

Who was crucified. On Calvary's cross. He is Jesus. He died. For the sins. Of the world. That's part of his. Portfolio. Part of his reputation.

[27 : 00] That he died. On Calvary's cross. For my sin. He is the Jesus. Who is the Christ. He is anointed. At God's right hand.

He is God's king. He is the Messiah. The anointed one. God raised him up. From the dead. And because. He had paid the price. For my sin. He honored him.

He gave him. To sit at his right hand. Until his enemies. Were made his food stool. He is Jesus. On the cross. He is the Christ. On the throne. Of God.

And he is the righteous one. He is righteous. He meets the norms. Of God's law. In his own person. He is perfect. And holy.

In every step. That he took. Every word. That he uttered. Everything was perfection. What he said. I could trust. The words. That he spoke.

[27 : 54] Were powerful. And he spoke. With authority. From God. He was righteous. In all. That he said. In his life. And he was also.

Righteous. In. His life giving. In the sacrificial. Offering. Of himself. If we say.

That righteousness. Is obedience. We hear the words. Of Paul. With regard to. The son of God. Who took on him. The form of a servant. That he was.

Obedient. Even to death. On a cross. And therefore. God highly. Exalted him. His life. Was righteous.

His passion. Was righteous. Everything. That he did. At perfection. And God. Honor. And God. Glorifying. Written. All. Over it.

[28 : 50] And that's why. Today. For us. We read this letter. Of John. John. John wants them. To be sure. That they understand. The centrality.

Of Jesus. The importance. Of the passion. Of Jesus. And of the work. Of Jesus. That he must be. At the center. Of their lives. If they're going to live. As the family. Of God.

They have to appreciate. Who he is. And what he is now doing. On their behalf. And surely.

If we're inspired. Today. To come with our sin. To God. Because we know. The father loves us. Surely. We have no excuse.

Today. To say that. We cannot come. Because we don't. Understand our sin. Or we don't. Understand our case. Surely. We're inspired. Today. Because. In Jesus Christ.

[29 : 48] We have the person. Who says. Don't worry about your words. Don't worry about. How you're going to express yourself. If you come.

I'll take up your case. For you. And I'll take up your case. For you. Before the throne. Of God. Where God has promised me. Success.

How can we stay away. How can we hold on. To our sin. When the path. To our sins. For given. Is not only clear. To us. But it's a path.

For everything. That we need. Is provided for. By God. A family. Conference.

Thirdly. And finally. We have a family. Consideration. What is. What is. The important thing. In the whole process.

[30 : 46] Yes. Your sin. Is very important. Recognizing it. Is very important. It is the most important thing.

The second most important thing. In your whole experience. That you recognize. Your sin. Is.

The moment. Of this family. Of this family conference. And of this family conversation. Is. That the most important thing. Is not your sin. And the most important.

Consideration. Is the cross. Of Jesus. Is. He is. The propitiation. For our sins. And not for ours only.

But. Also. For the sins. Of the whole. World. The propitiation. What does that mean? It's all.

[31 : 39] All of its. Depth. And all of its. Complexity. What does it mean? It means that. In the wisdom of God. Our sin.

Is covered. By the blood. Of Jesus. And because. Our sin. Is covered. By the blood. Of Jesus. That the wrath. Of God. Is turned.

Away. And once. The wrath. Of God. Is turned. Away. There is. Peace. With. God. And.

We. Can't think. Of the image. That the Bible. Gives to us. What was it? In regard to. The centrality. Of the cross. Of Jesus. That because.

Of our sin. We have turned. Our backs. Upon God. And because. Of our sin. God has turned. His back. Upon us. He is angry. With us.

[32 : 36] And. Nothing. Can bring us. Together. Unless something. Happens. To the wrath. Of God. And. There is nothing. That I can do. To change that. But. But God. Provides.

His son. To die. On the cross. At Calvary. And when. That happens. God's wrath. Is turned away. And God. Is turned around. The cross.

Of Jesus. Is. That. Head. Turning moment. In the experience. Of. Of the sinner. And in the.

Experience. Of God himself. That God. Is satisfied. In that moment. When Jesus. Says. It is. Finished. I have finished.

The work. That you have given me. To do. Propitiation. Turning away. Of wrath. God. Accepting. The redemption. Price. God.

[33 : 31] Pleased. With what Jesus. Did. And peace. With God. Through the Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. And.

The consideration. Now is. Wonderful. Really. I confess. My sin. And. I come. Taking ownership. Of my sin.

And in this. Marvelous transaction. That is at the center. Of this consideration. Is a place. Where Jesus. Takes ownership. Of my sin. And where God. Tells me.

With regard. To my sin. That the Lord. Has laid on him. The iniquities. Of us all. That God. Made him. Who knew. No sin. To carry our sin.

To be sin. For us. That we might be. The righteousness. Of God. In him. And as I look. At the. The cross. Of Jesus. Today. Which is at the center. Of the government.

[34 : 26] Of God. As I. Look at the cross. Of Jesus. I see my sin. Being carried. To him. I see him. Suffering. For my sin. I see the debt. Being paid.

I see the. The. The. The. Pen of God. Across. The deficit. On my account. I see God. Saying. It is finished. I see God. Saying. I accept.

The work of Jesus. And therefore. I accept. Those. Who are sinners. And for whom he died. And when. God is.

Today. Dealing with my sin. Jesus. Is in there. For me. Who suffered. For my sin. And he's not.

He's not going to say. Concerning any one of us. Oh no. That person. He did not. Commit such a serious sin. It's not going to be. That kind of defense. He's not going to follow.

[35 : 21] The process. Where. He's going to try and. Excuse you. For what. The wrong. That you have done. He's going to. Explain. That wrongdoing. In a way that you could never. But he's also.

Going to lay before God. At God's throne. Do you not remember. Do you not remember. What you said. That. If I go. And if I die.

For this sinner. And for that sinner. That you'll accept. My death. On the cross. As. As payment. As the turning away. Of your wrath. Do you not remember that.

And on that basis. Alone. You must. Forgive them. Because. You have promised. To forgive them. And the discussion.

There's hardly. Even a debate. There's no argument. Because. God has. Stated. The process.

[36 : 19] Not because. He needs to be. Persuaded. To forgive you. But in order. To highlight. The beauty. Of the way.

Of forgiveness. And so that. The cross. Of Jesus. Which is at the very. Center of the life. Of the Christian. Going on. In this journey. Through this world.

Is also. At the center. Of the throne. Of God. So that. The cross. Of Jesus. Is unforgettable. To you. And of course.

It is. The cross. On whom. The king of glory. Died. It's unforgettable. If I'm a believer. Today. I cannot. Go a step. In life. Without.

Being reminded. And without. Reminding myself. The preciousness. Of Jesus. But also. The cross.

[37 : 13] Of Jesus. Is at the very. Center. Of God's. Own heart. And of God's. Own. Dealing with his people. God's. And as we read. Down through. This letter.

We see that. All of this. Is because. Of his love. His love. That is so far reaching. So. Downward going. In order.

Today. That. You and I. Could. Have hope. That there is. Peace with God. Through Lord. Jesus Christ. Christ. That we become.

Functional. In the family of God. With Jesus. At the center. And putting your. Trust in him. Because. He ever lives. Above.

For me. To intercede. His all redeeming. Love. His precious blood. To plead. His blood. Atoned. For all of race. And sprinkles now. The throne of grace.

[38 : 11] Hallelujah. Isn't God good? And isn't. Jesus Christ. A great savior. May God bless his word. We'll bow our heads in prayer. Almighty and.

Most gracious God. Our loving heavenly father. We praise and bless your name today. For the work of salvation. For. The marvel of.

The wisdom of the way. In which you have. Put such. A path together. Through the passion of your son. So that a day we can come to you.

The fearless. Because. Of the way in which you have said. That you will wash away our sins. And that you will accept us. And receive us. So help us to have the fear that is reverence.

And the fear that is worship. But help us to be assured of your love. That you will receive us. As we do come to you. And help us in our coming to you. And give us to know your peace. And your grace.

[39 : 07] And your love in our hearts. Both today and always. As we pray all of these things. For Jesus sake. Amen. Going to Psalm is Psalm 103.

And sing Psalms. On page 135. Psalm 103. And we are singing at verse number 8.

Down to 14. Verse is 8 to verse 14. The Lord is merciful and kind. To anger slow and full of grace.

He will not constantly reprove. Or in his anger. Hide his face. From verse 8 to verse 14. To God's praise. The Lord is merciful and kind.

To anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove.

[40 : 19] Or in his anger. He will not be. For in his anger. He will not be. He will not be. For in his anger. He will not be. He does not punish our misdeeds.

Or give our sins. Their just reward. How great.

His love. His love. As I ascend. Towards all those who hear the Lord.

As far as east is from the west. So far as love has borne away.

Our many sins and trespasses. And all the guilt that on us lay.

[41 : 38] Just as the Father loves this child. So God loves those who fear his name.

For he remembers. He will not be. He will not be. He will not be. His love.

He will not be. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.