

1 JOHN 2:1-2 “EXPECTATION VS EXPERIENCE”

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INTRODUCTION

Third in series on letters of John, following Stuart & Steve – what were their main points?!

Only given two verses! Two verses in 30-40 mins? But what two verses!

My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.

Wow! And only 30-40 mins!

Exposition/exegesis – every word important, even the little ones.

Sometimes we'll need to look at Greek, but only where necessary.

START AT THE BEGINNING: “My little children”

John's special word *teknia mou*, used 7 times in 1 John, only once or twice elsewhere in NT

Affectionate diminutive (not *teknon* but *teknion* = darlings)

- relationship, intimacy

Probably written near end of 1st Century, John an old man, everyone was his “little children”

They respected and honoured him as a father-figure, he knew this and accepted it

Fatherhood missing in today's society, and in large parts of the church

We all need fathers – do you have a spiritual father, someone like John, who knows you well enough to call you “my little child”? Worth thinking about.

CONTEXT: “I am writing this...”

What? Before, i.e. 1 John 1:5-10, i.e. Steve's message from last time!

Light & dark, truth & deception, confession & forgiveness etc

Not just interesting theory – written for a purpose – but what?

PURPOSE: "... so that you may not sin"

What? Surely not?

Unrealistic goal, unachievable target, unfair expectation

Perhaps he was joking? Did John really expect this? Even worse, does God expect this?

He says it again several times

- 3:6 – No-one who abides in him sins, no-one who sins has either seen him nor knows him
- 3:9-10 – No-one born of God commits sin, for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God ... whoever does not do right is not of God (Literally even stronger – "Everyone having been born of God does not do sin")
- 5:18 – We know that anyone born of God does not sin

We'll come back to this three times later in this series! John obviously meant it, and meant us to hear it.

But he clearly recognised that saying it and doing it were two different things – his next word is "but"!!!

And elsewhere he seems to say the opposite:

- 1:8 – if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves
- 1:10 – if we say we have not sinned we make God a liar

And others:

- Romans 3:22-23 – There is no distinction, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Jeremiah 17:9 – The heart is deceitful about all things and desperately corrupt

So what could he have meant? Why write it if it's impossible? Alternative hidden meaning perhaps?

- Habitual sin vs occasional sin?
- Sin as a principle vs sins in practice
- Character vs behaviour?

Need to take plain meaning, but this is where original Greek words are helpful: *ina me hamartate*

Hamartano = sin, literally to miss the mark [thrown spear, shot arrow]

Aim at the target, but don't hit it

Important concept – come back to this later

Me – not the common word for “not” = *ou*, very different meaning

- *Ou* = negative of fact & statement, absolute, objective = deny
- *Me* = negative of will & thought, relative, subjective = reject

Me is about choice, intention, decision, will

John says “The reason I wrote chapter 1 is so that you may choose not to sin”

Very high goal!

REALITY CHECK! “... but if anyone does sin...”

John has set the goal, but recognises the possibility we just might not reach it!

Phew! Let out clause??? Don’t have to worry about it then?

Question: How likely does John think it is that we might fail?

“if”, therefore not definite

- *Ean* = compound particle, *ei* + *an*, i.e. *if* + *perhaps* (haply, possibly, maybe)
- very soft, very uncertain, not guaranteed, much less than 100%
- followed by subjunctive = might

“If perhaps anyone were to sin...”

High goal with possibility of failure, but expectation of hitting target

Does this match our expectations of ourselves, or our experience?

Or have we settled for failure, expect it as normal?

Gap between EXPECTATION and EXPERIENCE

Reality = struggle, tension, conflict, dilemma

People try to resolve this by going to one extreme or the other

- “I never sin”, or “I always/only sin”
- Can lead to arrogance or depression

The resolution comes from the word for sin = *hamartano* = missing the mark

Question – what are you aiming for?

- Aiming for failure, shoot arrow into ground, not surprised when we miss the mark?
- No, aim for target, try to hit it, sometimes miss

We should aim for “... so that you may choose not to sin...”, that’s the goal.

What is your experience?

Actually, the result is mostly success! We each make hundreds of decisions and actions every day. How many are sinful? All??? NO!

We succeed many times each day:

- Tell the truth = bullseye!
- Resist temptation = bullseye!
- Respond to Holy Spirit = bullseye!
- Witness to friend = bullseye!
- Love my wife = bullseye!

Need to recognise and celebrate success.

Then “if perhaps maybe anyone were to sin”, it’s the exception not the rule

A question of maturity:

- Keith & Gwen (archers) nearly always hit the target
- I nearly always miss

Hebrews 6:14 – the mature have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil

So what are you aiming for??? Recognise how many times you hit it – and then deal with the occasional miss.

DEALING WITH FAILURE: “But if perhaps anyone were to sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins”

Not left to sort ourselves out, God has prepared an answer = a person

Advocate = *parakletos* = legal representative, counsellor, stands alongside accused to represent them

Note – if we should sin, we are guilty i.e. it’s wrong, we don’t have to do it, no excuse, not compelled, it’s our choice, our fault, our responsibility

So we deserve judgement, that’s why we need a competent advocate

Our advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous – none better!

His advocacy is *pros ton patera* = towards the Father

Not facing us, but representing us in front of the Father, facing the judge

Not there to help us, but to satisfy the Father, his advocacy is directed towards God

- The judge
- The one offended
- The one who needs to be satisfied

Jesus is not just the advocate, but he is also the solution

“he is the *ilasmos* for our sins”

- Better translation = KJV propitiation = appeasement, settling the wrath of God
- Not RSV expiation = cleansing, settling the guilt
- NIV atoning sacrifice = cop-out!

Propitiation is very big topic, too big for today, no time, deserves own talk!

SUMMARY SO FAR

The goal is that we should choose not to sin, though we sometimes do

God is angry if we do sin

Jesus stands before God and alongside us to represent us

Jesus the righteous takes away/settles/appeases the wrath of God

ONE MORE THING: “he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world”

Another biggie! a well-known “problem verse”

Who did Jesus die for? Just the chosen or everyone? What is meant by “the whole world”? Can we take the plain sense of these words, or would that be inconsistent with other parts of scripture?

Dispute between Arminians and Calvinists over the extent of the atonement

Also between “four-point modified Calvinists” and “five-point historic Calvinists”

Options for “the whole world”:

1. Generic – it means everyone. “us” = Christians, “the whole world” = everyone including us. The atonement is valid for everyone but not everyone accepts it.
2. Geographical – “us” = Christians in Asia Minor, “the whole world” = Christians elsewhere (i.e. “the whole Christian world”)
3. Eschatological – “us” = Christians now, “the whole world” = the future world, the new heaven and new earth
4. Ethnic - “us” = Jewish believers, “the whole world” = Christians from all races

Another topic which is too big for today, would take a whole talk to address

SO WHAT?

Expectation vs Experience

We need to accept the challenge of God’s expectation – that you might choose not to sin

And recognise the reality of our experience – but perhaps someone might sin

Don’t go to an extreme – arrogance (I can be perfect) or depression (I’m a total failure)

Let’s aim for the target, practice to improve our aim, move on to maturity

Celebrate our successes – by his grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit we often hit the target

In times of failure when we miss and fall short, remember that “we have an advocate”, let Jesus be the answer.