

Talk – 1 John 2:28-3:10 – Adoption & Fellowship

Purpose of the Series:

The Christ is Jesus – and in him you may know that you have eternal life.

Central Truth

Central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God.

Purpose

I want to listener to recognise that central to fellowship with God is acknowledging the Son – and to live as a child of God.

Bible Reading

1 John 2:28-3:10

Today's issue:

(At least in the West) individualism is valued higher than community/family.

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Outline

Confidence

Adoption

New Birth

Confidence?

What does John ask of you?

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CHECK TIME

Talk

Father's Day

- Happy Father's Day.
- This is a day where we still seem to recognise the important of family and relationship over that of western individualism. I like Father's Day.
- When Father's do it right, they create a safe place – a safe place for those who are his children.
- A place where children are loved and valued, protected and promoted, disciplined and taught – such that they can walk in the world confident that they have one who is for them every step of the way.
- Most Father figures here, I hope, would see the value and importance of caring for children and being the best father possible – yet every father figure here would know how easy it this to fail at this important job.

- The key theme we look at today from 1 John is 'Adoption & Fellowship' – fitting for Father's Day. [Slide: 'Adoption & Fellowship' – 1 John Flower]
- In God, we have a Father who, unlike us fallen Father figure, gets it right every time.
- I hope what you will see that *central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God.*

- Before we go any further, how about we pray?

Prayer

Lord our Father,

Help us to approach you confidently as children safe and secure in the love that you have for us and show us in your Son, Jesus Christ.

And help us to know, feel and respond to the love that you have lavished upon us as your children.

Help us to put our hope in you as well listen to what you say in 1 John.

In Jesus name. AMEN.

Confidence

- As we have looked at 1 John over that last few weeks we have seen lots of key ideas and themes all intertwined.

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- As a result, we have this rich tapestry before us, a tapestry that when we step back to view it as a whole we see key colours and patterns running right through the work – themes like *life, love, truth* and *obedience* which sit in contrast to themes like *fear or hate, falsehood* and *selfishness*.
- One of the themes that can be easily missed is that of ‘confidence’. And that is where I would like to start today.

- How can a believer be confident in the fellowship they have with God the Father?
 - How can a believer *be confident* in the fellowship they have with God the Father?

- Look with me at 1 John 5:14 [READ 1 John 5:14 – emphasis ‘confidence’]
- As John gets ready to close his letter, he acknowledges that hope that any child would have – that they might approach their Father and that he might listen.
- It seems that one of John’s aims has been to build up the confidence of those who are the children of God – such that they *know* they can come before God, not in fear, but in confidence.
- Confidence is a by-product of what it means to *live in truth*.

- If you turn back to Chapter 4:16 – second half of the verse [READ 1 John 4:16b-17].
- See the confidence there. This child of God who lives in the Father, who *loves* like the Father – is a child, *like* his or her father.
- Confidence is by-product of *love*.

- Or look at Chapter 3:21 [READ 3:21-22]
- Children here have confidence to stand before God and to receive from him whatever is asked – not that they have a sugar daddy – but because as they have lived in a way that is obedient and pleasing.
- There is a realistic picture here of what it means to be in fellowship – to be in the family of God.
- The child lives following the instruction of the Father and one of the benefits is that the Father provides and gives when the child asks.
- I can tell you as a Father, that when my children are doing what I have asked, I am so much more ready to listen and give what they are asking for – but when they don’t, I tend not to be so willing to give until I see that they have obeyed.
 - ‘Dad, Can I play on the ipad?’ – ‘Have you taken the garbage out as I asked?’ – well until you have, ‘No!’.
- Confidence in relationship is a by-product of *obedience*

PAUSE

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- Now look at Chapter 2:28 [*READ 1 John 2:28 – emphasis ‘confident’*]
- In many ways, this verse is the hinge of the letter.
- In the first part of the letter he has acknowledged that there are many who will deny the Father and do their best to lead his children astray – to walk in the darkness.
- John’s concern has been to encourage believers to remain with Jesus and to walk in the light.
- And so, from verse 28, John starts to describe for believers what it means to remain with Jesus – you can see ‘continue *in him*, so that when he appears (when we see Jesus again), we might be *confident* and *unashamed*’.
- *Central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God.*

Application

- This should give us pause for thought.
- One thing that *all people*, believer or not have in common, is that one day we will *all* stand before Jesus.
- It will either be because we have died, and as judge of the living and dead, Jesus will be the one we stand before.
 - Or it will be because, as promised, Jesus has returned, and on that day he will judge all the living and the dead.
- Let me ask you...If that was to happen today – would you be confident?

PAUSE

- I ask that seemingly rude question, because that is what John is talking about here.
- ‘Continue in him, so that *when he appears*, we may be confident’.
- That means, that when Jesus appears, all those who have denied him or ignored him will suddenly find themselves having to give an account for themselves before the very one they have disregarded.
- It will be very hard, to make a case for themselves.
- But, as Pastor of this church family, can I tell you my fear?
- On that day when, the members of this church stand before Jesus (me included) – my fear is that we won’t be confident either.
- Why? - because *our version* of what it means to be a child of God – will look nothing like the version that Jesus is looking for!
- I hope my fear is unrealised.
- Jesus will say:

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‘Have you loved others sacrificially like I asked you too?’ – And we might say,
‘Only when it suited me!’

- ‘Have you held to my Word of truth?’ - and we might say, ‘Well, truth is whatever I want to make it’.
- ‘Have you been obedient to my will?’ – and we might say, ‘I think so, I have done what I wanted to do and sometimes that was in line with what you have asked!’
- ‘Continue in him, so that when he appears, we may be confident’.

PAUSE

Child of God

What does it mean to be a child of God?

- John says, you need to be *born of him* – Chapter 2:29 [READ 2:29-3:3]
- If you know that God is righteous – can you see this is speaking to the one who knows God – if you know him, you know his righteousness, anyone who doesn’t wouldn’t give God the credit of being righteous!
- If you know him, it should be obvious by the right that you do, that you are ‘born of him’.
- To be ‘born of him’, means naturally that you look like him.
- It is to bear the family resemblance.
- They say, that ‘The apple never falls far from the tree!’
- Well a child of God should be like the good apple that falls from the tree
- Anyone who does what is right, like God, is one who is seen to be righteous, like God.
- What John wants to get across is that the child of God, bears some resemblance to their Father.

There are two elements which may be helpful to think about when it comes to being a child of God.

The first is the whole idea of ‘Adoption’. The second is the idea of ‘New birth’

Adoption

Let’s talk about adoption.

- You can see in verse 1, that it is the Father who has *lavished upon us his love* – such that we could be called ‘children of God’.

Illustration

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- I have been reading *Anne of Green Gables* with my daughter.
- For anyone who hasn't read the book (so the blokes here), let me paint the picture for you.
- Anne Shirley is a 12 year old orphan who has been passed around orphanages since she lost her parents.
- One day a lovely but aging couple (brother and sister, Mathew and Marilla Cuthbert) send for an orphan boy to help them around their farm in the beautiful town of Avonlea on the Prince Edward Island.
- To their surprise, Anne Shirley turns up! A girl.
- She is overwhelmed by the beauty of the farm, with its cherry blossoms, and its creeks and its sweeping flower filled paddocks – but most of all, she is overwhelmed by the thought that there is someone in the world that would have her – who would give her a home with a bed, and with toys, and dress her, and feed her and adopt her as part of their family.

- For a moment (a few chapters at least) her joy is turned to absolute dismay when she finds out that Mathew and Marila wanted not a girl but a boy! – and there is some doubt about whether she would be able to stay.

- One of the extraordinary gifts that is adoption, is that a child is taken into a family as if they are their own.
- They are given all that they need, for good or for bad they are provided for and cherished, loved and cared for.
- An outsider, drawn in to be an insider with full benefits.

- That is the picture John paints here.
- Believers are children of God because God has lavished upon them that which is his so that they can be called his very own. And the benefit is all for the child of God.
- At the time this was written, adoption in the Roman world was a fixed and certain arrangement – once adopted you could not un-adopt.

- But yet, with this adoption come a reality. The world, who doesn't know God, will now *not* know you.
- Well it shouldn't, if you are indeed living as a child of God.

- It is one thing to be part of a family, it is quite another thing to live in a way that honours that family.
- John's encouragement here to believers is to say, if you are a child of God, then you need to live as obviously a child of God – to be like him (verse 2), to be pure like him (verse 3) – in fact look what he says from verse 4 [READ 3:4-6]

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- That raises the bar doesn't in?
- Okay friends, from this point on, no more sinning! (me included)!

- As we looked at last week, this is not talking about sinless perfectionism – John cannot be suggesting that given what he has said back in 1:8 - 'if we think ourselves to be without sin then we deceive ourselves, the truth is not in us'!
- What John is getting at here, is that if you are to be a child of God, then you need to be living for God.
 - Your intention, your disposition, should be that which aims to live for God, as an obedient child wanting to please their parent.
- It should also be obvious to others, in your behaviour that you are indeed a child of God – every time you sin before others, that works against your case. Every time I sin before others, that works against my case.
- *Central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God*

New Birth

- For as good as 'Adoption' is, that is not the whole picture.
- Let's think about 'New Birth'
- In the next section, John talks about what it means to be 'born of God'
- Look at verse 7 [READ 3:7-10]
- There are two different kinds of people in view here – the child of the devil and the child of God.
- This is talking about influence. Who does the child listen too?

- Notice that there is something that both God and the Devil have in common (that is a strange thought isn't)
- They both want to have influence over a person!

- The devil's influence will lead you astray, he will encourage you to do that which is sinful, because that is what he has always done right from the beginning.
- The devil's influence over a person does nothing to benefit his child.
- And in the end, the devil's work amounts to nothing, because it is destroyed by the Son of God – that was the reason that the son came in the first place, and it is the reason he will come again.

- God's influence is of entirely a different order.

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- It is a new birth – you can see in verse 9 that God’s seed is planted in them, that the person is ‘born of God’ – which is another way of saying that they have been given a new heart and mind, one which wants to love and serve him.

Illustration

- When a person becomes a Christian (I have had the privilege of seeing this so often in the JesusWORKS courses) – when a person becomes a Christian, they remain in their same body, they don’t change personality, they don’t grow another head, but they are transformed from the inside.
- It is that God has given them a new heart, a new reason for living, a new orientation.
- No longer do they live captive to the world, or the flesh or the devil, but they are freed to live for God and in God – because of what Jesus has done to cancel out the debt of sin (as we looked at last week).
- Yes, they are still tempted by the world, the flesh or the devil – in fact there will be times when they will still sin according to the world, the flesh or the devil – but it will mean that their orientation will now first and foremost seek to serve the Lord.
- That is what it means to be a child of God.

- What this should also mean is that a person over time is transformed outwardly – their behaviour changes, they will use their words, and their body, and their time, in ways that will be more reflective of their new status as one born of God.
- So, when John says in verse 9, no one who is born of God will continue to sin, he is talking about the transformation that you should expect to see in the person who lives their life orientated towards God.
- *Central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God*

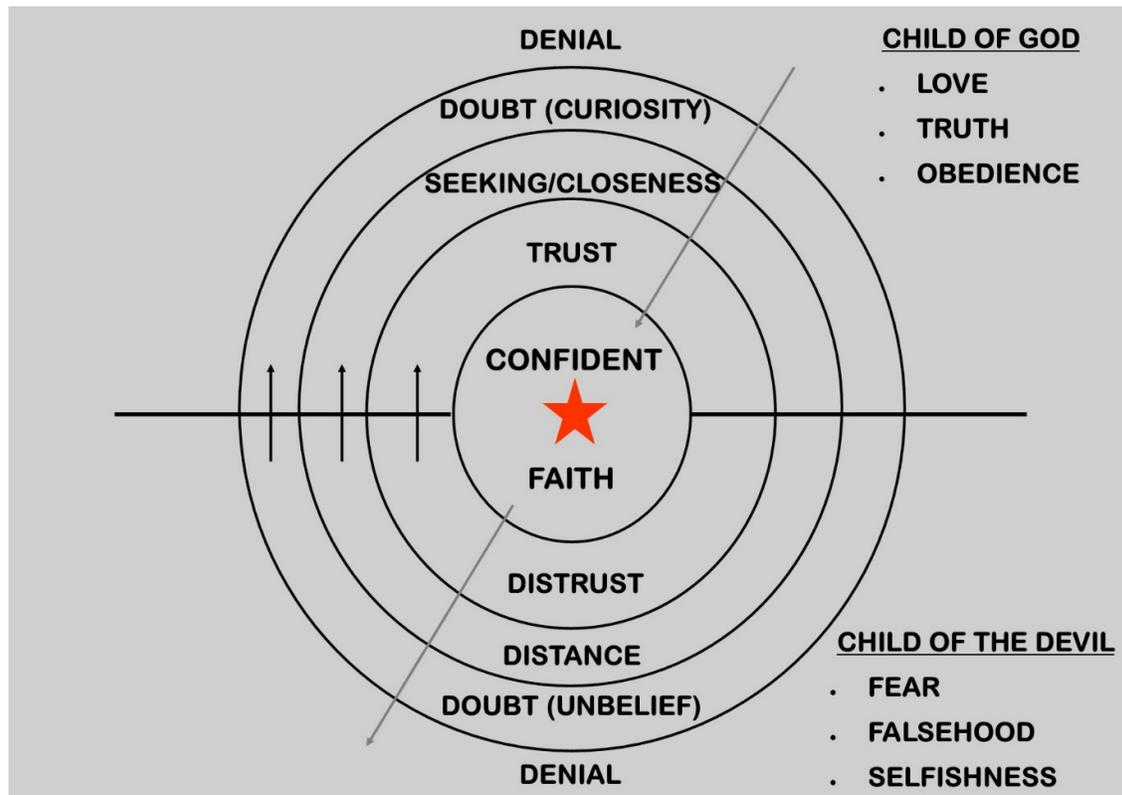
PAUSE

Confident in Faith

- Let me return to the question I asked right up front.
- How can a believer be confident in the fellowship they have with God the Father?

- I have been a pastor now for the best part of 20 years – and I want to show you something that I think speaks to the way I have seen people grow in confidence in their faith. [Slide – Process of Faith]
- With apologies to the graphic designers here – hopefully this captures what I want to say...

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- This is my 'faith target'!
- What it is trying to do is capture the process that I often see people take as the *move toward a confident faith* – the inner ring is trying show that.
- Sadly, there is also a process that I often see people take as they *lose confidence in faith*.
- Notice everywhere outside the target is a state of '*denial*'.
- This is as far away as a person can be from a saving faith in Jesus – that is the state we are all - either prior to accepting the gospel or while we reject the gospel.
- When someone comes into faith, I see them often move through a series of stages.

- Go to the top.
- First, you *Doubt* – but a good doubt. This is the kind of doubt that you have when you are unsure about something and so you check it out.
- Next, as you check things out you start to grow in *closeness* to God. Whenever you work to get to know another you understand them better and naturally you grow closer to them – it happens as you *read* his word, as you *meet* with his people, as you *pray*.
- As that continues, you move to a point where you start *trusting* him – you make decisions that put his will before your own.

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- And naturally, your *confidence in faith* grows.
- Now, as we all know, sometimes in life things happen which challenge our faith – sickness, loss, disappointments, loneliness, difficulties, grief – the list is almost endless.
- How you respond when your faith is challenged comes down to who you choose to listen to and be influenced by.
- For the child of God (for the person who listens and is influenced by God) – you push forward, trusting God, keeping close to him in his word, with his people and in prayer and when you have doubts you check them out seeking to understand what God might be doing for you.
- By for the child of the devil (for who listens and is influenced by the devil) – that process looks a bit different.
- Bottom half of the target.
- First you start to *distrust* God – this is where you stop making decisions that put his will before our own.
- That leads to *distance* – separating yourself from God – you stop reading his word, avoid meeting with his people, stop praying.
- That logically leads to a *doubt*, but this time to bad doubt. This kind of doubt is really just unbelief in disguise. It is the kind of doubt that occurs, when you say you have doubts, but instead of checking them out, you just let them grow until you convince yourself there is no merit in listening to God or having faith.
- And sadly, that just leads to denial.

PAUSE

- There is another factor that maybe helpful to consider given what we have looked at over these past few weeks in 1 John. [Slide – Process of Faith with Child of God/Devil]
- What is the mark of a child of God?
 - You know them because they *love* others, they live by the *truth*, and they are *obedient* to God.
- And the opposite is also true. How do you identify the child of the devil?
 - look to see if they are more focussed on *fear* or *falsehood* or *themselves* (before God and others)
 - I suspect you will also find that they distrust God, distance themselves from him and his people and rarely pray.

PAUSE

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- Now, one last comment, which may help if you look at that ‘target’ and think that you can identify more with the bottom half than the top half but yet you want to turn things around and return to a position of confident faith.
- Recognise that the way to turn things around (under God) and return to a position of confident faith is to reverse the process – to move from the bottom half of the target to the top half of the target (follow the ring).
- If you are starting to *distrust*, then call on God to help you *trust*.
- If you are *distancing* yourself, then draw *close* – read your Bible, make sure you meet with God’s people, pray.
- If you are *doubting* – don’t run away, check out the facts, look for answers, reengage your curiosity.

PAUSE

- *Central to fellowship with God the Father is acknowledging his Son and in turn living as a child of God* – and others will see that as you exercise your faith by loving others, in truth, obediently.

Pray