



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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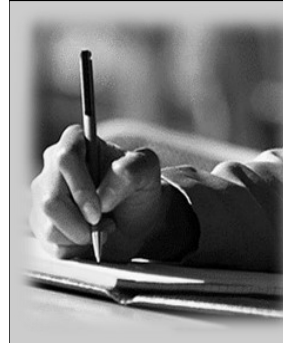


HG175 *Walking In The Light* True Confidence

1 John 5:1-21

Home Group Study Notes

25 November 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

What makes you feel confident in your everyday life?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...

HG175 *Walking In The Light*
True Confidence

1 John 5:1-21

Home Group Sermon

25 November 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr

John finishes his letter by reinforcing much of what we've already looked at in the early chapters during this series and reminds us how we can find true confidence in our faith.

1. Faith Is The Key To Victory, vs 1-5 Every single person lives by faith in something. The issue is never whether people have faith, it's what they put their faith in. Many people in an independent, self-sufficient and comfortable society as ours only come to the point of questioning what their own personal safety net might be when they are already free-falling in the midst of one of life's traumas.

Rock climbers, at least the moderately sane ones, protect themselves on a climb with ropes, but those ropes need anchor points to give any protection from a fall. It has to be said that some anchor points are more secure than others. But when a climber finds a secure anchor point, I would imagine it changes the way they feel about that bit of climbing! So, in beginning to climb they exercise their faith in the ability of that anchor to hold fast in the event of a fall and to give assurance and confidence to go ahead. And for John in Ch 5 his priority is to emphasize that Jesus is the only true anchor point for our faith and our lives.

John begins in vs1 with the belief that Jesus is the Christ and ends in v5 with the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. And we know from our series, that false teachers were denying that very truth of who Jesus was - they were saying that Jesus wasn't the Son of God. But if Jesus isn't God, then he cannot be our Saviour and redeemer and we cannot live through him as we learnt in Ch4. Jesus Christ, the Son of God must be the object of our faith. No other anchor will do.

Having Jesus Christ as your anchor makes you a Christian. You've trusted in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. You are 'born of God' as John puts it in vs1. There is no bigger transformation that can ever happen to you. You have passed from death to life. Your destiny has changed from Hell to Heaven, all because of Jesus.

But this faith also makes you love other Christians. If you're born of God, you love God and as Ch4 reminded us we show God's love in the way we love other Christians. We can't live our 'Christian' lives with zero reference at all to our brothers and sisters and their needs, can we? No. We will show that we love them, and in doing so know that we love them, vs2, by loving God and obeying his commands.

But then notice that this faith in Jesus Christ also makes you an 'overcomer'. And whilst the ultimate victory is certain, vs4: ... 'this is the victory that has overcome the world'. An unbelieving society, yes, but also the daily challenge in our own lives against 'sin, the world and the devil' as the liturgy in the Baptism service reminds us. So, holding on to this fundamental truth of who Jesus really is, is absolutely essential if we as Christians are going to survive in this world, and not just survive, but overcome, be victorious because Jesus is in the centre of our lives. This faith works and the reason it works is because it's real. The reason faith in Christ is the key to victory is that:

4. If we can't know with certainty God's will, how can we pray in faith? How can we know that He has granted our requests?

5. How 'radical' is our fellowship at Emmanuel? What might God be calling us to do?

6. What, out of all that we have studied through this series, really sticks in your mind? What has challenged your faith the most? What has strengthened your faith the most? What has inspired you the most?

Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. What is the difference between the vague idea of ‘faith’ that many people have and ‘faith’ according to what John writes about in this book and other passages in the New Testament?

2. What is your ‘anchor point’ that gives you confidence in your faith and your walk with God?

3. John mentions ‘water and blood’ and the ‘Holy Spirit’ as evidences that Jesus is the Son of God. What evidences would you use when speaking to others about Jesus (This could be from scripture, history of experience)?

2. Evidence Is The Key To Faith, vs 6-12 On first reading these verses seem to be less than straightforward but we should let vs11-12 frame our approach here. ... *this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* The focus here is on the work of Christ - his ministry and what it achieved. If we keep that in view we won't go wrong. With an eye on the false teachers who would rob Jesus Christ of his attributes, John takes us back to the realms of his own experience as an eye-witness and he sets up a courtroom scene where three witnesses are called to give evidence in support of Jesus as the Son of God.

Firstly, John calls *the water and the blood*. The water here refers to Jesus baptism, and the blood refers to his death. The reason he calls these is because false teachers like Cerinthus believed that the Christ, the Son of God came upon Jesus at his baptism and then left him before his death. John states that Jesus, the Son of God came literally (and very importantly) *through* water, that is, he was the Son of God before his baptism. But even if Cerinthus conceded that, John is at pains to say ‘but not only did he come through water but *through* blood as well’ referring to his crucifixion, and the fact that he was the Son of God through his death too. Think for a moment about how his baptism relates to his death, isn't the symbolism of baptism itself a powerful summary of Jesus future ministry with its vivid pictures of death, cleansing and new life? And so, Jesus Christ the Son of God could only fulfil that picture by shedding his blood.

The next witness John calls is the *Holy Spirit* who endorsed Jesus as the Son of God at his baptism. John 1:32-34: *"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."* And John also writes in vs6: ‘it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.’

We're all familiar with swearing on oath in a court of Law. And who is it that we swear before? God! Well, if we accept man's testimony at such times, what will we do with the testimony of God the Holy Spirit, who doesn't have to swear by God to tell the truth for He cannot do anything else but tell the truth!

So, faith in Christ is the key to victory and evidence for Christ is the key to faith and that leads us on to the climax of John's letter, enticingly labelled in your NIV bible as ‘concluding remarks’ (Always remember, the scriptures are inspired by God, the section headings are not!).

3. Assurance Is The Key To Living, vs 13-21 As we've seen in previous weeks John constantly presents us with three sorts of test: a doctrinal test – what you believe; a moral test – are you obeying; and a love test, and the reason for that is vs13: *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

We all know that experts are those who know more and more about less and less until at last they know everything about nothing! Well John certainly wants us to know more and more but he wants us to know more and more about more and more. Just look at what the Christian knows according to John: know that you have eternal life v13; know that God hears us and know that we have what we asked of him v15; know that those born of God do not continue to sin v18; know that we are children of God v19; know that Jesus has given us understanding and know him who is true v20.

And it is the person that knows who can have confidence. There are three parts of our lives where this assurance will be seen.

a) Confident in prayer vs 14-15: All relationships are based on communication. It's a well-known fact that relationships break down because of a lack of communication. But with good communication, a relationship grows and flourishes. And it's this relationship with God for which we are created. And in this relationship, we find the very meaning and purpose of our lives and prayer keeps our relationship with God fresh, healthy and real!

Prayer should never be considered as a one-way phone call like leaving a message on an answering machine. Prayer allows us to hear God – and it’s vital that we listen. Prayer satisfies that spiritual hunger we all have. It quenches our spiritual thirst. It refreshes our soul.

Philip Yancey in his book: ‘Prayer: Does it make any difference’ writes: *The main purpose of prayer is not to make life easier, nor to gain magical powers, but to know God. I need God more than anything I might get from God.*

The apostle Paul wrote (text for 2012) *“Don’t be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7).

It is important to notice what John is not saying here. He is not offering carte blanche to ask for anything and everything you want. I mean, what would our lives be like if all our prayers were answered! I’d have married a different girl; I wouldn’t be a father to Ben and Annabel; I’d have probably still had eight years in prison – only this time on the ‘wrong’ side of the bars! I’d have a different job; I probably wouldn’t have gone to Theological College; and Billericay wouldn’t have me as Team Rector!

Rather vs14 ‘this is the confidence ask anything according to his will’. The expectation is that as his children we are committed to the family business and that will be reflected in what we ask God for. But for those who take care to get to know the will of God found in the Bible, will find themselves praying for those things that God is passionate about and more concerned about doing than we ever could be! That is our confidence. However, confidence in corporate prayer isn’t something that we as a church are committed too. Attendance at first Monday or third Sunday Prayer & Praise has rarely reached double figures and despite changes to format over the years it’s still our Achilles heel. The DCC have agreed to cancel P&P for 2019 and to look for new ways to encourage you, as the family of the church, to want to pray together. Watch this space.

It was suggested at the DCC that we need some teaching on prayer and so our next Home Group series will look at several of the Apostle Paul’s prayers to examine the continuing relevance of prayer to our life and faith and to remind ourselves that prayer should always be the starting point in everything we undertake as Christians. If ever there is a time when we need new confidence, and renewed commitment, in our personal and corporate prayer life, it is now.

John says that we should take time to think through the things we pray for and think what God’s will is. Try and identify that revealed will in the place he has revealed it, the Bible and pray accordingly. And our confidence in prayer will spill over to the way we view our Christian relationships. We will be:

b) Radical in fellowship vs 16-19: Here we come to some verses that have caused a huge amount of debate over the years. The crux of this debate is to do with the difference between sin that leads to death and sin that doesn’t lead to death.

We know there are two groups of people in John’s sights. The children of God whom the evil one cannot harm because of Jesus vs18, and those who have gone out from amongst them 2:19 back to the world and who are now under the control of the evil one – the false teachers. It’s most likely that John has these in mind when he speaks about a sin that leads to death, where that sin has been a turning away from Jesus.

But the focus of his attention is on those who commit a sin that does not lead to death. This person is a brother/sister, vs16. Why should this sin not lead to death? Simply because if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves 1:8, but if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. But sin is serious vs17 and we are to pray for this person, that God will give him life. And that there is a confident prayer based on God’s promise.

Being radical in fellowship involves at least two things: an awareness of the deceitfulness of sin and a desire to cut it out of our lives whenever it surfaces. That involves a personal commitment to one another, not least to pray for each other. So how radical is our fellowship here at Emmanuel?

Once again, we are to be defined by our love for one another and who can measure the benefits we receive because of brothers and sisters who have supported us in prayer. It’s immeasurable. And finally, our assurance is directly related to our being:

c) Strong in ‘knowing’ vs 20-21: I’ve written this as ‘knowing’ rather than ‘knowledge’ for a reason. Knowledge is abstract and detached but ‘knowing’ implies an active relationship. And according to vs20 any knowledge and understanding we have is only because Jesus has given it to us through that relationship that Christians have with him! We are able to know him through his word and as we respond to what he says, and as we get to know more of what he commands, we’ll become stronger and more confident in our faith as we walk in the light.

Conclusion So, as we come to the end of our ‘Walking In the Light’ series we’ve been reminded that truth matters. In my introduction to this series, I suggested that John’s letter is a vital and powerful word to the contemporary church to hold fast to what the Bible teaches. The doctrine we hold to that shapes our theological positions matters – especially in the midst of controversies and divisions that exist, not only within the Anglican Communion, but the worldwide church.

I’ve really enjoyed both preparing for, and listening to, all the sermons in this series. I hope you have too. So, a thank you to: Pauline, James, and Rachel for your ministry to us and to all Home Group leaders who have led these studies. How I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall at times!

I also said in my introduction that I hoped we would grow in our passion for the gospel and the glory of God through this sermon series. I pray that has been the case and I pray that you have grown in confidence in your faith, true confidence that comes from ‘Walking In The Light.’

**FOR YOU DID NOT
RECEIVE A SPIRIT THAT
MAKES YOU A SLAVE AGAIN
TO FEAR, BUT YOU RECEIVED THE
SPIRIT OF SONSHIP.
AND BY HIM WE CRY,
“ABBA, FATHER.”**

ROMANS 8:15

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