

TUESDAY 11 October 2022 "THE Question"

(1 John 2:1-6)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Yesterday I left you in the old city of Ephesus with the apostle John as he is writing the first of his three little letters found toward the end of our New Testament. He had just written one of the most powerful statements imaginable: **"...if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."** (1 John 2:1,2)

As we concluded our time together yesterday, we considered the first amazing part of that statement: *the resurrected Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is an ADVOCATE for you and me, standing in the presence of God, ready to intercede and mediate for us with the Father whenever we, who have trusted in Jesus to be our Savior, have sinned.* Oh my, that's reassuring, isn't it? We don't have to worry about not being perfect!

Do you see the second part of that great statement? **Jesus not only died an atonement death for you and me but for the sins of the entire world!** This is called 'unlimited atonement'. It's the powerful truth that any person, anywhere in the world, at any time of the day or night, regardless of age or gender or marital status or socio-economic status or education or anything else... *can, and will be, forgiven of their sins by Holy God if they confess their sins to God and trust that Jesus' atonement death payment is enough!*

The resurrected Jesus is standing in God's presence ready to be the advocate for ANY repentant sinner whether it is their first time of acknowledging their sin and seeking God's forgiveness, or they have been a follower of Jesus for many years and have stumbled morally or spiritually and need fresh forgiveness for some sin they realize is disrupting their relationship with their heavenly Father. *No one, no one my friends, is unforgivable... no one!* Hebrews 7:25 proclaims it this way: **"Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for them."**

Now I wonder my friends what your response is to these great assurances from God? Jesus deserves our unlimited gratitude and God, our heavenly Father, deserves our unending love, worship and praise, do you agree! I wonder as John finished writing these statements, if there were tears flowing down his cheeks? He had watched Jesus crucified! I wonder if John knelt at his writing table with his heart overflowing with praise, but also breaking at the huge number of people in Ephesus who didn't believe it to be true.

Have you noticed *there is a direct relationship between "obedience" and love, gratitude, and respect*? You can see it with children and their parents, or teachers and their students, or coaches and their athletes, or supervisors and their employees. Can you see it in your own life my friends? Did you know Jesus said something very profound about this? When with His close friends, His disciples, in the upper room only hours before He went to the cross, Jesus said: ***"If you love Me, keep My commands... Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make Our home with them. Anyone who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father who sent Me."*** (John 14:15, 23,24)

Now my friends, we can't rush past those powerful words without giving them some serious thought. You see it don't you? **Love and Obedience work together.** Notice Jesus did not say obedience happens in fear of punishment! Oh no, Jesus said *obedience flows out of LOVE! In fact, did you notice Jesus said when a person is NOT obeying God, they have a love problem? Actions are an outflow of the condition of our heart. Disobedience is unloving rebellion, isn't it?*

So, when I refuse to do what God has clearly told me is His desire, then I'm living in rebellion against God, isn't that true? And if I live in rebellion against God my actions reflect the condition of my heart which means my heart is saying *'I don't love God, I don't respect God and I'd rather do what I want to do, honoring myself rather than honoring God with my choices, my words, my attitudes, my behavior.'*

Now let's pause for a few seconds and think about that my friends! It's a dangerous thing to live in rebellion against God as God continues to sustain your very life, every breath, every day! *So, I have a question for all of us... what do your words, attitudes, choices and behavior tell us about the attitude of your heart toward God?*

John is being led by the Holy Spirit to write this letter titled "1st John" to all Christians, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, everywhere, in response to a simple question...*'How do I know if I really am a Christian? How do I know if God has done His 'born again' work in me? How can I know if I am forgiven of my sin and the Holy Spirit really does live in me?'* Are those questions you've ever asked yourself?

So, John has picked up his stylus and is ready to write... ***"We know that we have come to know God if we keep His commands. Whoever says, 'I know God', but does not do what God commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys God's Word, love for God is truly made complete in them."*** (1 John 2:3-5) Wow! What do you think about that my friends? John is writing very much what Jesus had said in the upper room several years before. *Love for God will result in obedience to God's instructions, right?*

Our world is full of people claiming to have a relationship with God. Some claim the proof of that relationship is their devoutness in religious activities or practices.

Others claim the evidence is their generosity in giving financially to their church or to the poor. Others claim their proof is the amount of Scripture they have memorized or the amount of Scripture they read daily. Others claim the proof of their relationship with God is their service to the church or the poor or the community or even foreign missions. *But Jesus had said it very simply... obedience to God's instructions is proof of your love for God!*

You've noticed John has already several times in the first two chapters of his little letter cautioned his readers about being **LIARS!** Now that's not a word most people use lightly. Often, when John challenges us to consider certain people are liars he also adds *"...the truth is not in that person."* Have you noticed deception, deceitfulness, lying is like a cancer? You cannot contain it to one topic or one event. *Liars have a character that is infected with deceitfulness.* Therefore, EVERYTHING they say is suspected of being in some way tainted with some level of untruth. Do you know anyone like that? *Have you noticed TRUST and TRUTH are very closely linked? We trust people we believe are truthful. And we don't trust people we believe have a tendency to be untruthful or deceitful.*

Yesterday we saw John made 5 **"IF WE"** statements in chapter one of his letter. Now here in chapter two, John is doing it again. With each of these statements John is giving us the opportunity to ask ourselves a simple, self-evaluation question... **is it me? Is John describing me?**

In this case it's a simple question: *'am I obedient or disobedient to what God has commanded should be my words, my attitudes, my choices and my behavior?' IF I can live in disobedience to God's commands WITHOUT any profound conviction from God that I should repent and receive God's forgiveness and change my life to become more obedient to God, then very likely I have NOT yet experienced the genuine, life changing work of the Holy Spirit in my life, and thus I may not yet be a 'born again' Christian!*

Look, John is picking up his stylus again: ***"This is how we know we are in God: Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did."*** (1 John 2:6) When John uses the phrase **'in God'** he means *'in an authentic relationship with God'.* *This separates those who claim a relationship with God from those who actually have experienced the transformational work of God in their lives and are living in a genuine, God designed relationship with God.* By that I mean the relationship a person has with God is God INITIATED, God sent Jesus His Son to earth to proclaim God's desire for relationship with every person.

It is God ACCOMPLISHED because Jesus the Son of God paid our full sin price with His atonement death, and *God the Father puts into motion every distinctive aspect of our salvation transformation, in response to our sin repentance and our full trust in God to accomplish our salvation by the work of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

Our relationship with God is SUSTAINED by God the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and our love/gratitude spiritual pursuit of an ever-deepening relationship with God. That is how Jesus lived His exemplary life every day in this sin filled world. **Jesus lived each day in an authentic, vibrant, relationship totally dependent on His heavenly Father and sustained by the Holy Spirit empowering and guiding His every word, every attitude, every choice, and all His behavior.** Do we see this in how Jesus lived? Can we look honestly at ourselves, each of us, and ask the simple but essential question: **am I living in relationship with God in the same way Jesus lived in relationship with God?** If YES, then that is a good indication that my salvation is authentic. If NO, then I have reason to question if I have ever, truly been 'born again' by the Holy Spirit of God. Now we need to ponder this, don't we, my friends? I'd suggest we spend some time talking with God about this.

And here's a song that may well have been the type of words Jesus prayed to God each day as He faced the challenges of our world. Is this song your heart's desire and mine?

Today's Scripture is 1 John 2:1-6.