

## Summary of an introduction to 1 John

This short letter has always been loved and valued by Christian believers with its assurance of God's love 3:1, of full forgiveness 1:7 and the promise of fellowship with God 5:13. Written by the apostle John it corrects error and directs Christian believers in the path of genuine discipleship.

At that time it is some 30 years since the Son of God appeared on earth. Many small house-group fellowships of believers exist throughout the known world. Each group seeks to be faithful to Jesus Christ even when opposed from outside and, tragically, undermined from inside.

John is in Ephesus where he leads a church and, given his apostolic task to care for Christ's people, he has links with many other house churches. Some of John's own people have caused trouble and split away from him, teaching new ideas about Christian living and denying the divinity of Jesus.

John must warn the churches and encourage them in gospel truth and godly living.

## Summary of 1 John chapter 1

1. John's credentials as an eye witness authenticate the truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God 1:1-4
2. 'Doing the truth' is the only basis for believers' fellowship 1:5-7
3. Forgiveness of sin is the greatest freedom available to any of us 1:8-10

## Chapter 2 - outline

[1] TRUE BELONGING 2:1-11 is shown by:

Hate of sin 2:1-2 [Distinguish – sin as a state & sin as a surprise]

Desire to obey 2:3-6

Love of the brethren 2:7-11

True belonging leads to

[2] CERTAIN PROGRESS 2:12-14

True belonging requires

[3] FAITHFUL FOLLOWING 2:15-27

Eyes front 2:15-17

No regrets 2:18-19

Hold the line 2:20-27

**We resume our Bible study of 1 John and ch 2 is the focus.**

## Chapter 2

[1] TRUE BELONGING 2:1-11 is shown by:

Hate of sin 2:1-2 [Distinguish – sin as a state & sin as a surprise]

Desire to obey 2:3-6

Love of the brethren 2:7-11

True belonging leads to

[2] CERTAIN PROGRESS 2:12-14

True belonging requires

[3] FAITHFUL FOLLOWING 2:15-27

Eyes front 2:15-17

No regrets 2:18-19

Hold the line 2:20-27

Written by the silver-haired apostle John. John lived a long life for an apostle. He was the only one of the 13 to die naturally in old age – all others martyred – e.g. James executed by Herod in 44 AD, Peter crucified about 66 AD, Paul beheaded outside Rome.

John was able to leave us 5 NT books – 3 letters, a Gospel and Revelation.

He led a church in the Ephesus area until exiled to the island of Patmos during the Domitian persecutions in the middle 90's from where he wrote Revelation. One lovely strong tradition is that in Ephesus he took care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home.

Anyway all was not easy in his church.

An enlightened few (probably well-known even respected men) were saying let us move on; we should have a new fellowship with more spiritual worship, more personal freedom ... a more mature Christianity. They had to re-interpret traditional beliefs to give them the latitude to be liberal in behaviour.

People who thought that they had attained a spiritual status and state where confession was unnecessary and 'being perfect, they no longer needed to strive against sin and for righteous living. If no sin; no need for a saviour so weaken belief in the atonement.

They seemed to be forerunners of DOCETISM [from Greek dokein = 'to seem']

Christ is divine and he only seemed to become human ... and GNOSTICISM – a view that a special few had an enlightenment which lifted them to a higher spiritual plane.

We cannot pin down their false teaching from 1 John what we can say is that there was **a tangle of self-centred alternatives to traditional faith** causing trouble.

They left John and circulated among other early church home-groups looking for people to join them. House-groups sharing a theological heritage and historical roots were under threat. 1 John is a letter of encouragement not just to remain in their churches but to remain faithful to the fundamentals of the faith based on Jesus- the Son of God.

When '*members*' left it caused upset leaving many to ask:

Who are the true Christians? Those leaving? Those staying?  
And how do we know?

1 John 2:1-11 answers that question by giving us 3 test to apply.

[1] TRUE BELONGING 2:1-11 is shown by:

Hate of sin 2:1-2 [Distinguish – sin as a state & sin as a surprise]

Desire to obey 2:3-6

Love of the brethren 2:7-11

Those who truly belong to God will:

Have a hate of sin 2:1-2

Have the desire to obey God's commands 2:3-6

Love the brethren 2:7-11

3 characteristics which are only true of the person in fellowship with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ - 1:3b

True belonging leads to

[2] CERTAIN PROGRESS 2:12-14

Johns form of address is warm and affectionate ... and he AFFIRMS the house-church believers – dear children v12 – then fathers (the older people in the fellowships) and the young men (the younger people in the fellowships)

Encouragement that they have made certain progress

Indeed – the praise is strong because the blessings have been lavish ... they know the Father, they know the Son who appeared on earth and their sins are forgiven

But also ... they are strong and they have overcome the evil one (in standing against the false views and remaining in the original house-churches)

Praise and affirmation that certain progress is being made.

THESE AFFIRMATIONS prepare the ground for our 3<sup>rd</sup> point. John now moves from affirmation to exhortation.

True belonging requires

[3] FAITHFUL FOLLOWING 2:15-27

Eyes front 2:15-17

No regrets 2:18-19

Hold the line 2:20-27

EYES FRONT 2:15-17

Look forward

15a, 17a

We are not to look backwards or sideways; we are not to love the world

It is of course a contrast to 2:10 love our fellow believers

The world is defined in verse 16

It is the realm – the mind set – which involves craving/lusting/boasting.

Wanting more and then with puffed up pride boasting of ones possessions.

## NO REGRETS 2:18-19

It is the last hour – the last part of God's plan  
Creation – Rebellion – God's promises – Failure – Rescue by the Son who  
appeared on earth – and now in this last hour the time to be remain faithful.

Those who oppose 2:1c and 2:2a Jesus the Righteous One and His atoning  
sacrifice are the anti-Christ's - opponents of the Gospel and the true people of  
God.

They have shown themselves to be false by leaving the fellowship 2:19b  
Don't wish you were with them. Have no regrets.

John's language may seem too strong  
The leaving and staying too definite  
But we need to remember this is the early church – there is only the one  
church – with historic roots and a defined faith. It must be protected.

[We however have become used to many denominations, many splits, many  
new fellowships and we have become tolerant. Liberalism in religion has  
allowed anything to be believed. John could not have gone along with this]

1 John says to us: True belonging requires faithful following

## EYES FRONT – NO REGRETS **HOLD THE LINE...2:20-29**

V20 you know the truth v24 what you have heard from the beginning vv27  
remain in Him

Illustration: In Ancient and medieval warfare one of the terrifying encounters  
was 'shield wall'. Two sides closing on each other. Then contact – shield  
against shield down the length of the wall AND the cry from the commander  
was HOLD THE LINE! Once the line was broken opposition warriors would  
surge through the gap and all would be lost.

HOLD THE LINE John exhorts verse 24 & 25.

The opponents are real v26; the issues are critical v22 and then 23  
Did they 'hold the line'? Yes.

Have we?

At times, we the Christian church down the centuries, have been valiant; at times we have been soft.

So to the last 2 verses rounding off chapter 2

V 29 – we can be confident that we belong – born of God and His forever.

V 28 - IS THIS NOT WHAT WE WANT? It is a truly glorious position to be in during life and when facing death.

Thank you, Lord God, for John's written letter – his eye witness testimony to Jesus who is the Christ – his warm affirmations and strong exhortations. Please help each one of us to remain in 'the truth once delivered'. Amen.