

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. 28th Jan. 2007

Deeper – 'Lavished with Love'

1 John 2: 28 – 3:15 – Children of God



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

If St Paul is the apostle who wrote lavishly of the gospel of grace then St John, in the twilight of his life, is the one who wrote about the lavish love of Jesus.

The supreme work of the HS is to pour God's love into our hearts and to give us an experience of God's love for each one of us. Romans 5: 5 "*God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us*". And we all need to experience love. It is the prime requisite of every human being.

1 John 2:28 has an important word in it for each of us and one that we could so easily miss. It's the word **continue** - *continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming*. We have to choose – choose to continue. Choose to continue to walk in His way - it's a life long journey we are on. This same theme is picked up by St Paul cf. Colossians 1:22 -23. The challenge for each one of us is to trust him and to **trust what his word says about us**.

How are we able to choose to continue? John provides 3 answers;

1. It is because the Father has lavished his love on us and that we are called children of God.
2. It's because –we are **now** children of God.
3. When he appears we shall be like him.

Who is the Father's lavish love for? It's for everyone. John is passionate for us to understand how deep **the Father's love is for each and every one of us without distinction**. The Father's lavish love is revealed in John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16. So often though we think that God does not and will not like us. We are tempted to think that God does not love us and will not love us. We too easily fall into the trap of thinking that our sins are so great that he cannot and will not deal with them in his love and grace. The truth is that if we were to ask him what our sins were that we have confessed, his answer would be **I CAN'T REMEMBER**. (Ps 103:12)

This lavish love is a love in which God takes all the initiative to make us his children. When we choose to enter into a relationship with God, his spirit comes to dwell in us. And a heavenly mark is placed upon us. We are not only our parents' child but we are our heavenly father's child, adopted into his family. (Eph 1:5). When we have been on the journey some time we tend to forget who we are; sons and daughters of the King. We look down and let our crowns slip! Our experience of God's unconditional love must be shaped by the scriptures. But we have to understand his written word with our heads and hearts. (Heb 4:12) 'Sheer scholarship alone cannot reveal to us the gospel of grace.'

God is calling each one of us to bury the past and to believe what he says about us: to live as he intended, to live free from guilt, shame and anxiety and to luxuriate again and again in his most lavish love. A love which has not only called us his children but a love which enables us to live as his children now.

Recommended Reading: Brennan Manning 'The Ragamuffin Gospel' ISBN 1 85078 593 7

Worship and Witness: Ideas for worship and questions to discuss



1. Use Psalm 103 – as a means for praise and worship. Share together why and how the psalmist's words are liberating.
2. Read through chapters 1, 2 and the first half of chapter 3 again. Why do you think that John was so keen for us to understand the depth of God's lavish love?
3. Do you think that we are more inclined to believe in Jesus miracles than what the word says about us?
4. If we accept that God can and does forgive us our sins why is it that sometimes we do not forgive ourselves? How can we overcome this?
5. If God is the one who takes the initiative, why should we continue to respond – won't he just forgive and restore us anyway?
6. How does knowing that we are loved and that we are God's children enable us to walk with confidence? Share any times you have been encouraged and how your confidence in God's love for you has grown.