

The First Letter of John

True Knowledge

Answers to Session Four – God is Life

1. Reading the Old Testament, anointing seems to be reserved for those chosen by God for a special commission. In Exodus 30:22-33, Moses anoints Aaron and his sons as priests, using a mixture of oil and fine spices made up to God's recipe. In 1 Samuel, Samuel anoints Saul as king with oil. Christ is called "The Anointed One", and in Greek 'anointed' and 'Christ' come from the same root. So it is through Christ that we are anointed. In 1 John 2:24 we read, "See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you." What we heard was the good news about Jesus and what remains in us is our faith in him. In verse 27, John confirms that what remains in us is our anointing. So we receive our anointing when God gives us faith by his grace (Ephesians 2:8). Which means, it seems to me, in John's understanding, anointing is more about the bestowing of faith and the commission that goes with it, than the symbolism of the oils.
2. The privileges of a Christian life are all about having Christ in our lives; in loving him and knowing we are loved in return. In turn this makes everything we do for him a privilege. There is also the privilege of fellowship with other Christians and John stresses repeatedly in this letter the importance of fellowship.
3. Proving our faith is shown by our obedience to God's will. We try to follow Jesus example and try to do what he wants us to do for him on earth. What he asks us to do are our responsibilities and in doing them we are privileged.
4. John reminds us in 3:5 that Jesus came to earth so that he could take away our sins. Jesus was without sin. Sin is against God's law. If we persist in deliberate sin, we cannot be close to God. John encourages us not to be led astray (3:7), which implies we need to be alert and discerning, as we are so easily tempted.
5. In 3:9 we read, "*No-one who is born of God will continue to sin.*" Similarly in 3:6, "*No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning.*" Yet John knows we all sin, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" 1:8, so what does he mean. I think by continuing to sin he is referring to sinning intentionally in the sure knowledge that we are doing wrong. Most sins are due to thoughtlessness, carelessness or being weak and taking the easy path, not deliberately setting out to do wrong.
6. Christ did warn the disciples that they should expect the world to hate them, because it hated him first, John 15:17. All that is evil in the world naturally turns against all that is good. It is true that someone trying to do what is good and right, will very often provoke hostility. If, as Christians, we love other people, that too can provoke hostility, even hatred, especially in someone who has wronged us in some way. William Barclay writes in The New Daily Study Bible in The Letters of John and Jude, "Wherever Christians are, even though they say nothing, they act as the conscience of society; and for that very reason the world will often hate them."

7. How do we know that our knowledge of God is true? This is central to John's whole letter, because he is warning against the false knowledge of God, that is being spread by Gnostics.
- In 3:18-24 John tells us that the answer lies in love. If we act and speak with love, verse 18, then we are comfortable within ourselves that we are doing what is right, 3:19, and we may be confident that we are obedient to him and he is pleased with us, 3:23. So believe in Jesus, obey his command to love one another and we will live in him and he will live in us. We will know this by the presence of his spirit within us, 3: 22-24.

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