

## Introduction to Series on 1 John – Ian Rose

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During the course of this year I am fortunate enough to be able to preach 3 sermons on 1 John. I guess that many of us have favourite books in the Bible (mine often happens to be the one I am reading at the moment). I will therefore refrain from saying that this is mine. I do happen to think that this book addresses a current issue in our faith like no other. What is that issue?

I believe that our culture has lost its sense of identity. That is, we **do not know who we are and we do not know who God is.**

A couple of my favourite “T” shirt quotes are these:-

“I’ve been trying to find myself, have you seen me lately?”

AND

“I found Jesus (he was hiding behind the couch all along)”

FOR ME, these “T” shirts capture our times. We have become separated from our Creator and do not know Him. We have lost a sense of God. We have lost a sense of self. We are therefore without identity, purpose, motivation and direction.

I think that John was writing to a church or churches struggling with this very same issue of identity and that is why I think this the letter for our age – perhaps more than any other.

So the aim of the series is to give us a sure understanding of our identity as Christians, that is, **in Christ**

**1. 1 John 1 & 2. Sinners or Saints? Where’s your Wheely Bin?**

**2. 1 John 3. Individual v Community. Be Clint Eastwood or Be a Lemming?**

**3. 1 John 4 & 5 Assurance of Salvation. Lost and Found?**

### Background To this Letter

I think that the writer of this letter, who for mine is without doubt, John the Apostle - was reaching the end of his life. He too was probably in his 80’s and has come to two realizations.

One. He wasn’t getting any younger.

Two. He was certainly the last living disciple of Jesus and maybe even the last living person who had seen heard and even touched Him. And out of these realizations comes a large body of God inspired written work – John’s gospel, three letters and later still, the Revelation of John. All written from this unique and terribly important viewpoint – as the last living direct witness to Christ.

So now, let me turn to the message for this morning:-

# 1 John 1 & 2

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## Where's your Wheely Bin?

### Introduction

Now, this morning, I want to do three things.

**One** - focus on one theme in the first two chapters of John – How the Christian is called to deal with sin – through confession. This is absolutely key to knowing who we are.

**Two** – Look at the way in which our culture deals with sin – through various forms of denial.

**Three** – Equip you with some tools that may help you to lead a confessional life.

So, what does the passage have to say about our sinfulness ?

### 1. Sinfulness is dealt with through the blood of Jesus Christ –

it and only it purifies us from sin. There is no other basis. Let's look at 1 John 1:7 and 10 v7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

v10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Yes, it is true that we are purified from all sin through the blood of Jesus. BUT, sinfulness is part of who we are as Christians and there is no sense in denying it.

So, how are we called to deal with our sinfulness?

### 2. We are called to deal with sin through confession.

Let's look at 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Confession – not self improvement, not special knowledge, not denial, but confession is how we are called to deal with sin.

#### How does our culture deal with sin?

I want to start with an illustration. Our houses have rubbish bins – the rubbish goes in the bin and once a week, we put the rubbish bin out on the street. The rubbish goes off to the tip, never to be seen again. This is a perfectly normal way to deal with rubbish. But when it comes to sin in our lives, the culture that we live in presents us with a challenge. **It does not believe in personal sin. It believes that others sin, but not the self.** In the language of my illustration, there are no bins in the house. There is nowhere to put the rubbish.

Being unable to confess sin burdens us with the consequences of sin – shame responses and guilt responses. In looking at the way in which the world deals with sin. Here are some of the recognized ways of denying our sinfulness:-

### **Shame Responses:-**

- Denial – I don't need bins (how dare you suggest that I need bins)
- Repression – I try not to think about the rubbish – it's better that way
- Projection – He's the one who needs bins
- Minimisation – Yes, I've got a rubbish problem, but it's only a small one
- Dissociation – It might be in my house but it's not my rubbish
- Compensation – I might have rubbish, but I've got a really big Ferrari

### **Guilt Responses**

- I am rubbish – I should put myself in the bin. I must punish myself for my sin.

We know that we are sinful but self-hatred prevents us from moving to a place of confession and receiving forgiveness.

All of these responses are very real and I would argue that we have a natural tendency to adopt some form of denial when dealing with sin.

### Confession

BUT, let's look at what the scripture says:-

1 John 1: 9 again.

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Don't hide sins for shame. Confess them.

AND 1 John 2:1

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Don't wallow in guilt, Jesus himself defends you and has atoned for your sins.

**And here I come to the sharp end of the pencil!! Have done with shame, have done with guilt as a response to sin. Instead confess.**

## **3. What does confession involve? Tools to help with confession**

While general confession of sins is good, (Lord, I am truly sorry for my sins and I confess that I have sinned), on its own, it is not enough.

I believe that true, life changing confession involves three things – Awareness, Investigation and Agreement.

### Awareness

A part of maturity is to understand who we are. Sadly, this can be a difficult thing for us. We live in a very busy culture and putting aside time for self reflection is so counter-cultural that it is seen as distinctly odd. Try telling a friend that you put aside last Friday night to review your week and why and how you behaved. **Put aside time for self-reflection – I believe that it is an essential part of Christian growth.**

### Investigation

I have talked this morning about shame and guilt responses. These drive the problem of sin in our lives underground. Shame makes us hide and guilt weighs us down. **BUT confession investigates.** It is prepared to bring wrong actions out into the light, in the presence of a loving God, where they can be looked at and addressed. Why did I lose my temper yesterday? Why am I feeling so down? Why do I drink too much, eat too much? Why am I unable to stop visiting those pornography websites? Confession is not afraid to thoroughly investigate these questions. Confession will seek out a trusted friend and share these shortcomings. Confession will uncover the answers.

### Agreement

I don't, as a rule, go in for the latest buzz words. But here is one that I really like – "internalizing." Let me explain. God can tell us that something is wrong. We know that we should worship God and God alone. We accept this as an external standard, But we have so many needs and if only I had that one more thing, I would be happy. We do not really agree with God that happiness can only be found in Him. We have not internalized it – we have not adopted **"Worship-God –Only"** as our way of seeing things.

BUT confession is agreeing with God. It is seeing sin as God sees it and more importantly, **it is feeling about sin the way that God feels about it.** This is when we know that a God-Standard has been internalized.

### Conclusion

A normal household has bins in most rooms. When those bins are full, they are emptied into the wheely bin and then, once a week, the bin goes out into the street for the rubbish to be collected, taken away and never seen again. When we deny that we sin, or try to bear the burden of our sin ourselves, rubbish builds up in our life and we are robbed of the joy of life. When we confess, we take advantage of God's way of dealing with sin. The rubbish ends up out on the street, to be taken away, never to return.

I've tried to make this a very practical sermon – with tools – confession through self awareness, investigation and agreement. I encourage you to make any changes in your life that allow you the time to develop your skills with these tools. I believe that a joyful Christian life awaits those who will put them into practice.

I have just one short question for you this morning. Where's your wheely bin?