

A
Doctrinal and Devotional
Commentary
of the book of
First John

By
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A doctrinal and Devotional Commentary of the book of First John
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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

01 - Introduction to the First Epistle of John

1. AUTHOR

Early church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen, all agreed that John wrote not only the Gospel, but also the three epistles that bear his name.

2. DATE AND PLACE

Date

Most evangelical scholars believe that this epistle was probably written towards the end of the first century (around 95 A.D.), when John was a very old man.

Place

This seems to be an apostolic letter since there are no hints to when, where and to whom it was sent in particular. We only know that it was sent to those who had become Disciples of Christ in the true sense.

3. CHARACTERISTICS

Contrasts

John loves to use contrasts in his writings. For those who are not familiar with the Bible this way of writing may seem a bit strange. But actually it is not. Contrasting is still used today in poetry and other types of literatures. Here are some examples of contrasts given by John.

- children of God and children of the Devil
- Christ and antichrist
- life and death
- light and darkness
- love and hate
- righteousness and lawlessness
- truth and error.

Repetition of themes

You will find themes that John repeats over and over again as if he was hitting a nail on its head to be certain that it is driven all the way down. This is a teaching method that is still used today. Here is a list of his major repetitive themes.

- Assurance (2:25, 28; 3:3, 19-24; 4:17, 21-22; 5:2-4; 13-15, 18)
- Discernment (2:18-29; 3:7-10; 4:1-6; 5:20)
- Eternal life (2:17; 2:25; 5:13)
- Fellowship with God (1:1-10; 2:6, 17, 24-29; 3:1-3, 24; 4:7-17; 5:1)
- Holy Spirit (2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:2, 4 13; 5:6-8)
- Love for one another (2:9-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-21)
- Obedience (2:1-6; 3:4-10; 5:1-5)
- Truth (2:8-11, 21-29; 4:6; 5:6)
- Victory (2:12-14; 4:4; 5:4-5, 18)

4. PURPOSE

Typical behavior

In his first epistle John describes both the children of God and the children of the Devil through their habitual behavior. What one thinks and does simply manifests whom his father is as Jesus tells us:

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

(NKJV)

By contrast the habitual behavior of a true child of God is as follows:

- The child of God not only acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but he also loves God (4:19)
- A child of God will love other believers (4:7),
- A child of God obeys God's commandments (2:3)
- A child of God does not continue living in darkness (2:9)
- The highest test of a person who says he is a Christian is whether or not his life is characterized by righteousness (3:7)

The non-believer will also be like his father:

- He will continue to live in sin (3:8),
- He will continue to be disobedient to God (2:4)
- He will hate others (2:9)
- The simple test to prove a person is without Christ is that he lives in lawlessness (3:4)

5. False Teachers

Throughout this epistle John warns believers about false teachers and their doctrine which had crept into the church. The particular heresy that these believers faced was known as Gnosticism. This is the ancient belief that knowledge is the way to salvation.

Although these false teachers claimed to be Christians, they also claimed to have a knowledge superior to and in addition to the Holy Scriptures. Their main belief was that while spirit is truth, matter is evil.

Following this logic (that matter is evil), the man Jesus of Nazareth was not born as Messiah—because he lived and walked in the flesh! They reasoned that Christ (through the Holy Spirit) came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his crucifixion! Thus it was the man Jesus who died on Calvary, not Christ—making his sacrifice insufficient since a mere man is unable to expiate his own sins and even less the sins of others and can not later rise from the dead. In reality, they were denying the very foundation of Christianity—the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John not only warns followers of Christ about the perils of Gnosticism, but he also warns us not to:

“believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world”

John 4:1

6. Fervent Christianity

John is writing as a shepherd who is building up the people of God in the faith. Since this letter was written around the end of the first century, there were numerous second and third generation Christians. The passion and the fervor of their faith had worn off. They were like the believers who Christ had rebuked in Ephesus because they had left their first love (Rev 2:4).

7. The Certainty of Salvation and Eternal Life

One important theme that John wrote about was the absolute certainty that we can have in relation to the gift of eternal life. This is true because when a person believes in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, they receive the knowledge, or certainty, that they have *eternal* life.

1 John 5:13

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

(NKJV)

8. The structure of the epistle.

Unlike the Pauline epistles, this letter is not organized in a formal and systematic matter; but rather, the apostle's heart is shown through the repetition of themes. Even though there is no formal introduction, John begins his epistle by explaining how to have fellowship with God. The result of this fellowship produces:

- Joy (1:4)
- Obedience (2:1)
- Love (2:8-11)
- Discernment (2:26)
- Assurance (4:13)

9. The two major themes of this letter

Love

John dwells on the theme of love and the duty of loving God and also one another. For John this is at the very heart of Christianity and the calling of ourselves a disciple of Christ. The word LOVE is written 24 times in this epistle and he often speaks about love in 'blocks':

- 1 John 3:10-18 (6 times)
- 1 John 4:7-12 (6 times)
- 1 John 4:16-21 (6 times)

Piety or holiness of life

His epistle abounds with statements on the need for evidence of piety and holiness as a trait of character of the believer.

- 1 John 2-23 (8 times)
- 1 John 3:7-24 (5 times)
- 1 John 4:8-21 (4 times)
- 1 John 5:12 & 18 (Twice)

May your study of the first letter of John encourage and also challenge your faith in Christ Jesus.

FIRST JOHN
02 - 'The word incarnate'
1 John 1:1-4

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life ² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us ³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.
(NASB)

In this first section we will look at the introduction of this epistle which are the first four verses. I would like you to notice that there is a parallel between the introduction of John's first epistle and also of his gospel. By looking at both of them side-by-side it is very easy to see that the author of one is also the author of the other. Both begin in the same way, speaking of the same person and in a similar fashion.

John 1:1-5

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

We also just read the introduction to his first epistle.
(NASB)

Both start with the *BEGINNING* just like the Old Testament does:

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth
(NASB)

Both begin with the person of God and both introduce us to the WORD – the eternal LOGOS. By looking at both introductions we find that the WORD (Jesus) was:

- In the beginning
- With God
- God
- Creator of all things
- Manifested to mankind
- The true life
- The light of men
- Eternal life
- Capable of fellowship with men

For anyone to deny that Jesus-Christ is the Living God is to wilfully turn away from the testimony of the Scriptures. If I were simply to ask you: ‘who was in the beginning, created all things, is the true life and the light of men and has eternal life in himself?’ You would automatically answer; ‘God’ and you would be right. What is fascinating is that John tells us the following about Jesus Christ the LOGOS – the living God.

(1)...what we have heard

This means that the LOGOS actually communicated with humanity! This is absolutely incredible and is one of the most unbelievable miracles given unto man. Have you ever read a booklet with instruction on how to fix something or put it together? If you’re like me then you give up after a paragraph or two. It simply is too complicated. If that can be true with a simple booklet explaining how to put a BBQ together imagine the miracle it is for God to write to us about who he is and what he is doing! God spoke in a way that was understandable. He stooped down to OUR very limited capacities, which proves without a doubt that he deeply cares for mankind. When he spoke, it was because he wanted to be known and be understood, God had something to tell us! Imagine God wanting to communicate with you! When he spoke it was because he had a plan for mankind and speaking would be a means to introduce this plan to us. He could have used angels or any other celestial being to represent him and speak in his place. But God decided that what he wanted was ‘direct communication’ with his creatures. When John wrote ‘*what we have heard*’ –he meant that God spoke and he was understood. Communication happened, there was a connexion between creator and creature.

It is also written:

(1)...What we have seen'

Not only was the LOGOS heard – as the voice of the Father when he spoke of his Son.

Mat. 3:17

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(NKJV)

But people actually were able to see the LOGOS – the living Word (Jesus). Have you ever imagined what it was to hear and see Jesus? Can you imagine yourself as a disciple following him, resting with him, eating with him and drinking in every word that came from his lips? One day all true believers will be able to sit at his feet and receive the blessing of being in his presence. Seeing the living Word was a miracle by itself for it is written:

Exodus 33:19,20

Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

(NKJV)

Because no one was able to see the invisible God of the O-T and live, God took on flesh so that he could be visible for all men, women and children. He took on flesh so that men would not die from looking at him but rather be blessed by it. For men being able to see the Christ is a miracle by itself and a grace given to those who were with him. John then says:

(1)...what we have looked at and touched with our hands

The LOGOS was made flesh – it is called the mystery of the incarnation! Before humanity could not touch the one who created them. But now we see that our God and Savior is willing to be approached, willing to be seen, willing to be heard and willing to be touched. But why would God decide to do such a thing? Why not stay far away in his glory unsoiled by the presence of sin? The Lord God wants us to draw close to him.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(NKJV)

The Deists who say that God is far away and unconcerned with his creation have never understood the powerful introduction of either the gospel or first epistle of John. For God has done everything necessary for man to see, hear and touch him. He personally intervened in the history of mankind manifesting himself to all who laid eyes on him. But not all who saw him accepted what they saw!

In his second verse John speaks of:

(2) ‘and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us’

Life had not ever been manifested like this before and it was manifested by the person of Jesus Christ – God the Son! What is the real life that John spoke about if not life itself manifested! Jesus not only had life he was life. What is the good life – if not the life manifested! All goodness comes from God!

2 Thes. 1:11

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with

**power,
(NKJV)**

What is life all about - if not the life manifested! When we look at the life of Christ, every born-again soul is pulled towards imitating his Savior. We have a deep longing to be like Christ is and to emulate his very being. So all that there is to know about life could now be seen and understood because Christ was presently with men. Life was living to the fullest in the person of Jesus Christ. To look at him was to look at life and to hear him was to listen about life. What a blessed day it will be when the Lord himself will once more walk among his disciples. Will you be there? Have you received salvation from the hand of God?

(2) ... and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life

John then speaks of the responsibility of those who have seen the true life. Those who have seen and heard of this life ‘*testified*’ and also ‘*proclaimed*’ the eternal life that they have seen. John, as well as the other disciples, could not refrain from speaking to others concerning the Living Word. It was simply too much ‘good news’ for them to keep silent. There was a burning fire in their souls and they became heralds to all who had ears to hear. This was the mandate that Paul had decided to keep, whatever the cost.

Acts 20:20,21

(20)"how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

(21)"testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

(NKJV)

Paul kept back nothing and he proclaimed and taught the Good News which is: ‘repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’. This responsibility has not changed, the mandate is still given to all who have *seen* and have *heard* the Lord. This is the believers’ mandate. This is my mandate, if you are born-again this is your mandate – it will ever be our great mandate! The question is not ‘what is my mandate’ but rather ‘am I fulfilling my mandate’. And the message proclaimed by John and his companions is what we should also proclaim – *eternal life*. Proclaiming eternal life – the true life that took flesh has one aim, which is divided in two:

(3) what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Having FELLOWSHIP is the aim of proclaiming what was seen and heard. John didn’t evangelize because this was his ‘job’ to do. He didn’t spread the Good News because it was a burden laid on his shoulders by the Lord and he had to do it. John spoke of Jesus for a totally different reason: ‘*so that you too may have fellowship with us*’. John wanted others to taste the grace that was given in Christ Jesus. He desired people to receive forgiveness of their sins and become children of God (1 John 3:1,2). Have you ever considered why you evangelize people? What is the motive behind all the energy spent in proclaiming salvation in Christ? John preached the gospel for the right reason – do you? The apostle Paul explained what it means to have fellowship with God:

Ephesians 5:8

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light
(NKJV)**

Having fellowship is moving from darkness into the light, from death unto life. Fellowship is receiving his gift of true life. Walking hand in hand like a small child with his father. Simply trusting and being care-free because he is safe and sound. True fellowship is never burdensome or taxing on the believer, it is the joy of being 'one' with the Lord God. Peter wrote it this way:

1 Peter 2:25

**For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
(NJKV)**

To Peter, fellowship with God meant that we have turned back to where we were supposed to be – in his hands. Fellowship is being a sheep that belongs to the Great Shepherd. It is being cared by the '*Overseer of your souls*'. Fellowship is letting God be our heavenly Father. Now John mentions fellowship with the Father and with the Son – one does not go without the other!

(3) ...and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship is '*with us*' but the believers fellowship is first of all with the Father and the Son. So John wanted people to be 'one' with God and by doing so they would automatically be in fellowship with all the other true believers. Notice in this verse that that one can not be close to the Father and yet be far from the Son. One can not be close to the Son and yet be far from the Father. Have you noticed that some cults deny the deity of the Son yet they believe that they are in fellowship with God? Here we see that this is false. What is wonderful is that when a disciple pleases his Savior he automatically pleases his heavenly Father.

So proclaiming eternal life is proclaiming *fellowship* with God the Father and also God the Son. Once this is obtained – through repentance and a close walk in the light – *fellowship* automatically falls into this second stage which is:

(3)...so that you too may have fellowship with us

Having fellowship with the Father and the Son will bring the believer into fellowship with other believers. This is our spiritual 'link' with each other. When we are in fellowship with God then wherever we go we have automatic fellowship with other true believers. This is the wonderful grace that is bestowed upon all children of God. We feel an indescribable unity of mind and soul. We also find that it is *fellowship* with the Father, the Son and other believers that makes life truly blessed and joyful.

(4) ...These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

The word complete (PLEROO) means: to make replete, to cram. The joy our Lord desires to give to us is not to be considered like human joy or joy that can be found in the pleasures of this world. It is a joy that is in us and not outside of us. It is a gift freely given by our heavenly Father. It is a gift that God fills us to the brim with. That is why fellowship with God is so important and should be sought after like a hidden treasure! Our life can only be complete when we are 'ONE' with God and 'ONE' with each other. So let's stop looking elsewhere! Fellowship with God and his children is where true joy is found.

FIRST JOHN
03 - 'The conditions for fellowship'
1 John 1:5-10

In this section we are going to look at the conditions needed for fellowshiping with God. Let's not forget that we have previously seen that fellowship (with God and other believers) is what John is writing about.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
(NASB)

Being born into a family does not automatically give us fellowship with the other members. When we're just babies we're cute and cuddly, small and tiny, so fragile and harmless that everybody seems to *automatically* fall in love with us.

- The older brother wants to be the 'protector'
- The big sister wants to be the 'caretaker'
- Mom just admires all her children
- Dad, well he's so proud because he's a 'big boy' that looks just like him.

Both grandmothers want to be the first to baby-sit and the grandfathers tell their friends that they are grandpas again and that grand-child number six just arrived! But when this tiny little baby grows and shows his character, independence and defiance – suddenly he doesn't look so lovable anymore and fellowship is broken.

- His tantrums drive you up the wall
- His screams irritate you
- His demands offend you

The door of fellowship shuts and both of you find yourselves alone. There is a break in your relationship. Not that you are no longer a member of the family but that the harmony that once existed has gone like the morning dew. In life, just like with our spiritual Father, fellowship demands that both parties be satisfied with the conduct of the other.

Amos 3:1-3

- (1) Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:**
(2) "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."
(3) Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?
(NKJV)

It is not because I am born-again, passed from death unto life, from darkness unto light. It's not because I am in the hand of the Father and that no one can touch me – that I am automatically in fellowship with God! Remember both parties have to be satisfied with each other for true fellowship to happen. Since God is perfect and divine and since he loved me before I loved him (1 John 4:10) – it's NEVER the Father that is at fault in regards with fellowship. Since he is holy & just, without sin, since he does not change and is pure light – he never is the one that does something to break this fellowship. It is IMPOSSIBLE for the Father to be the reason for a broken fellowship simply because he is perfect in all things! That leaves only one person that can break the fellowship – and that is ME. So when we 'feel' that:

- There's something lacking in our fellowship
- God is far away
- Or that life is so dry

Look in the mirror and you will automatically find who the culprit is – YOU! I would imagine that as a child of God you would want to be in fellowship with your heavenly Father. In this section John explains why fellowship is broken. He does this so that the true believer can find his way 'back home'. First of all, we can break fellowship when we do not conform to God's will. This should not surprise us because it is exactly why we break fellowship with people around us! They do things that we really do not agree with and fellowship is broken.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The standard of fellowship we are talking about is the very person of God. He is our absolute standard. He sets the rules and God wants us to be like him in all we think and do. God does not ask perfection from us because our perfection is in Christ Jesus (Heb. 10:14). What God does want from us is an honest and loving heart towards him. As I said God does not expect perfection from us but one day he will grant his children to become Christ-like and that will be an incredible day!

1 John 3:2

**Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
(NKJV)**

Let's look at our first parents. Adam and Eve were created in His likeness and because of this they had perfect harmony and fellowship with God.

Genesis 1:27

**So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
(NKJV)**

They were both created in the likeness of God and fellowship was *perfect* – UNTIL sin entered their lives through disobedience. They stopped walking in the light. They voluntarily went against the only law God had given them – don't eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16,17). Adam & Eve fell in disgrace, they abandoned their first state and death entered into the scene. They were sent away from the Garden of Eden and the very presence of God. God no longer walked among them. Then they had children and this is what is written about their children:

Genesis 5:3

**And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.
(NKJV)**

So the children of ‘fallen’ Adam & Eve were no longer in the perfect image of God like they had been created to be. We can read that the children of Adam and Eve reflected their parents (begot a son in his own likeness, after his image) with their fallen and sinful nature. Fellowship had been broken between God and man and we can see that this was man’s fault! This curse of being out of fellowship with God has continued from one generation to the other and it is still among us today. Now God has brought a solution so that fellowship can be re-established – A Messiah that would come and destroy the works of Satan.

Eph 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

(NKJV)

Now that Jesus has come, all who repent of their sins and ask Christ to become their Savior will be forgiven and fellowship is re-established. As we walk on the ‘narrow road’ there comes a time that we desire and do things that displease God. Fellowship is broken and needs to be restored. When I say that fellowship is broken I do not mean that the true believer has lost his salvation (Christ has done all in our stead) but that God is displeased with his child. John writes on how fellowship is lost and restored.

The first condition for perfect fellowship is being LIGHT as God is LIGHT.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

It is difficult for us to even imagine that God is perfect light and that in him there is absolutely no darkness. Our world and everything in it is filled with darkness. From within to without spiritual darkness is present. Jesus warns us that our eyes can be filled with darkness and so will our hearts (Mat. 6:23). Paul speaks concerning the works of darkness (Rom. 13:12). To the Corinthians he wrote concerning the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. 4:5). To the Ephesians he told them that they were once darkness (Eph. 5:8) He also speaks about the rulers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). He also tells the Colossians that they had been delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13). As I said from our point of view we cannot fathom what is meant by God being light and that in him there is no darkness.

Christians can do two things in regards with their fellowship (being light) with God: we can either pretend to be light or really be light. Let’s look at pretending to be light to have fellowship.

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

What is meant that we *pretend* to have fellowship with God? Pretending is when we say we have fellowship while we ‘don’t walk the walk’. We just have the talk but not the walk. I call this ‘playing church’ or ‘playing make believe’. Do you remember when you were young and pretended to be an astronaut, or a champion skater, a superhero or a teacher with all your teddy bears as your students? Well some Christians are just like that. They pretend to be what they are not. It’s all a show and when church is over they become themselves again – different people. We automatically stop being in fellowship when we *walk in darkness*, when we play pretend before God. Spiritual hypocrisy is in direct opposition to *walking in the light*. John writes that when we just have the talk and not the walk, there are two things that we do:

(6) ... we lie and do not practice the truth

First of all we lie – we become liars before God and also before mankind. Why would any believer ever think that he can ‘play the fool’ before the Lord? How can he ever consider that his lies will not be noticed by God? When you ‘play pretend’ you not only lie to God and to people around you but you are also lying to yourself! I always thought that being a spiritual hypocrite was probably the dumbest thing a believer can do. Because you know that you are naked before the Lord, he knows ALL that you think and do.

Hebrews 4:11-13

(11)Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

(12)For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

(13)And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

(NKJV)

Second, in verse six John also tells us that we do not practice the truth. We are called to walk in the light and to shine before others. We are imitators of God and his ambassadors. What do ambassadors do? They represent their country and live the values so precious to it. An ambassador of Denmark does not reflect the values of New Zealand nor those of Argentina. He is called to live according to the standards of Denmark. When a Christian does not live in the light he represents someone else (and that is the values of) the prince of darkness.

As we have seen God is light and has no fellowship with darkness including those who reflect obscurity. But this can change and fellowship can be restored:

⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we have fallen from fellowship with God this is what we are told to do. We need to repent and turn back to the light and once more begin to walk in the light. Walking in the light means *'as he himself is in the light'*. In other words walking in the light is walking like Christ did. And when we do this fellowship is restored and we are cleansed from our sins. The arms of our loving Fathers are always opened for those who come back to him and desire to walk by his side. That's what we see in verse seven. The blood of Christ cleanses the believer from ALL sin. This is so important to understand! Whatever the sin may be, when I repent and return to the Father ALL is forgiven. You may be that person that wonders if the father will forgive what you have done. You may feel so guilty that your mind says 'God won't forgive you'! But this is not so: *'and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin'*. If you are that person, run into the Fathers arms, confess and you will be re-established just as the prodigal son was (Luke 15:11-32).

The second condition for having real fellowship with the Father is this:

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Saying or believing that we have no sin – makes all truth disappear and fellowship impossible! One can not have real fellowship with someone when that person knows that he is lying about himself! How can I ever believe that I have no sin?

**Romans 3:23
for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
(NKJV)**

He who believes that he has not sinned is a fraud, a liar, a deceiver and a spiritual hypocrite. It is far better to be honest with God. Tell him that you failed, that you have fallen and sinned. Be truthful and authentic. But never tell God that you are as white as snow! As long as you do, you will never have true fellowship with the Lord.

In verse nine John gives us the antidote we can use to bring back fellowship with God.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession (which naturally includes repentance) is the antidote and will restore fellowship. What we need to confess is our sins. God doesn't want a series of excuses concerning why you did this or that. Because that is not a confession. Be responsible for your actions before the Lord. Tell him what you did and sincerely desire to abandon these sinful things.

Verse nine gives us the Lord's guarantee – his solemn promise of forgiveness. We can stand on God's word because he is faithful and righteous. God cannot lie for he is God. If he says he will forgive then he does forgive. But God does more than just forgive (as though this is not enough!) he also will: '*cleanse us from all unrighteousness*'. In verse seven God cleanses us from all sin and in verse nine he cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We become spotless clean before his Majesty! All because of the redemptive blood of Jesus on the cross. Whatever your unrighteousness is it will be cleansed away – that's God's promise! Only after we confess our sins will God do his part in restoring full fellowship unto us. John ends with this reminder which actually is a warning.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Going around and saying or pretending that we don't sin is a grave offense before the Lord. Pretending I am someone else to my school friends is one thing (and it's not O.K.) but pretending you are someone else to God is definitively a grave crime. If God says we all have sinned and we say 'not me' then we call God a liar. Please remember that this is what Lucifer said in the Garden of Eden – that God was a liar and that eating of the fruit was actually a good thing.

So how is your fellowship with God? Are there things that need to be confessed? Are you playing a game with the Lord pretending to be who you are not? If this is the case, and if the Holy Spirit is nudging you, don't hesitate, repent and full fellowship will be granted once more.

FIRST JOHN

04 - 'Our conduct and fellowship'

1 John 2:1-6

In our last chapter we took a look at the conditions for fellowshiping with God. This is the ultimate goal that anyone can have in life – to be in harmony with the Lord God. Jesus said it this way:

Matthew 16:26

**"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?
Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

(NKJV)

1 John 2:1-6 will lead us into the workings of our conduct, which is *imitation*.

¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

(NASB)

As we will see the sort of fellowship with God rests upon our conduct. The teaching referring to conduct is not very popular today. We live in times where man does not want to be told what to do. The respect for God and his authority has become but a dim light in our churches. Christianity has placed expected conduct on their list of “to do away with.” We are no longer searching for God’s kingdom but for our own. We no longer serve God but desire that God serves us. We no longer trust God’s wisdom but we rather trust in our own judgment. For many who say they are Christians God has become just another social ‘thing’ they have on their schedule. They have become like the people in the church of Laodicea:

Revelation 3:16,17

(16)"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

(17)"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

(NKJV)

Churches that expect their members to conduct themselves according to the Scriptures are often called legalistic and churches that discipline their members are called authoritarian. We have wandered very far away from the simplicity of the apostolic teachings. Christian conduct was expected simply because God had made new creatures out of believers. A new heart, mind and spirit was given to all who came to the cross and fruits of this new life were expected to be seen. Had Jesus not told his disciples to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Mat. 5:13-16)? All of the apostolic writings deal one way or another with the conduct of the believer.

Paul wrote the following about the believer's conduct in his letter to the Ephesians which was probably one of the best church found in the New Testament. Even they were told of the importance of their conduct.

Ephesians 4:1

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

(NKJV)

Here we see that Paul begs the Ephesians to walk in a way that is worthy of their calling. We can see the importance of conduct in the eyes of Paul.

Ephesians 4:17

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

(NKJV)

Here Paul calls himself a witness for the Lord; as though he was in a court setting and being called to attest to what the Lord Jesus wants of them.

Ephesians 5:1

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

(NKJV)

No one can doubt the necessity of a godly conduct.

Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

(NKJV)

Paul is repeating the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is plain and simple. It is clear as mountain water, straight and direct and so easily understood! Walk as children of light. But Paul wasn't the only New Testament writer to place an emphasis on our spiritual behavior. The writer of Hebrews wrote the following:

Hebrews 10:35,36

(35)Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

(36)For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

(NKJV)

This is endurance in our walk and walking with confidence in what we have heard from the Lord. Doing the will of God not ours was the rallying cry of the first century believers. James wrote the following:

James 1:22-24

(22)But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

(23)For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

(24)for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

(NKJV)

How can it be clearer? How can believers say that their behavior has nothing to do with their faith? Have we become spiritually deaf? Or are our hearts no longer in love with our Savior? Peter wrote:

1 Peter 1:14-16

(14)as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

(15)but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

(16)because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

(NKJV)

God does care about what I do – ‘*you also be holy in all your conduct*’. Every parent has some standards which he desires his child to live by. Is it any wonder that God also has standards? If parents warn their children when they fail is it any surprise that the Lord does it also? Parents do these things not because they got this great idea from themselves but rather because God has placed these laws in their conscience (Rom. 2:14-16). Finally we saw in our last chapter what John wrote:

(1:6)If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

As you can see conduct has always had a leading place in the plan of God and automatically it plays a very important part in our relationship with him. Not that we are saved by our conduct (Eph. 2:8,9) but rather because it manifests our love and deep attachment to our loving God. So let's look at our text for today. Here are some of the character traits of someone who truly has fellowship with the Lord. As you read these traits of character (which are manifested by our conduct) try to see if you can honestly identify them in yourself. The first character trait is *the desire not to sin*.

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

For two people to walk in fellowship their desires must match. So it is with the Lord and his children. What the Lord is looking for in our hearts is the will to stop sinning, (that you may not sin) to stop offending him by our actions and thoughts. You cannot keep a friend if you constantly offend him - by hurting his feelings you will only push him away. A couple will soon lose their joy when one regularly offends the other. So our first trait of character of true fellowship is the honest willingness to stop all things that offend the Lord. The Lord must see in us a true desire to refrain from what dishonors him. If I know I walk against the will of God and do not make a sincere effort to rid myself from sin – then I cannot walk in fellowship with the Lord.

A second trait of character is *active repentance*. (2:1b,2) John brings to mind that we do all sin and that we should think of Christ who has atoned for our transgressions.

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

John tells us that when we sin we should remember Christ and his work at the cross. Remembering the love of Christ, what he has suffer in our place should bring the believer to repent of his sinning. We should be actively repenting throughout the day. The picture of Christ on the cross should bring us to our knees over and over again, with a heart filled with sorrow. If it does not, then we certainly are not in fellowship with God. If we do not repent or think very little of it, this is a sign that our hearts have become stone cold and we have belittled the grace that was given unto us. Active repentance is a trait of character that keeps His grace flowing and His fellowship alive.

A third trait of character is *being humble*. (2:1)

Being humble before God, knowing who we are and who he is – will keep a good fellowship going.

(1) ...Jesus Christ the righteous;

John reminds his readers that Jesus is the righteous one – not us. Jesus is the holy one – not us. Jesus is the perfect one – not us. God is well-pleased in him – not in us. Remembering these things will keep us humble before the Lord. Having the trait of character of being humble will enable us to stay close to him. Let's not forget what James tells us!

James 4:6

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

(NKJV)

Being humble, remembering that only Christ is righteous will help in our fellowship with God. The Lord abounds in his grace for those who are humble before him. The word 'humble' (TAPEINOS) means: cast down, lowly. How do we see ourselves before God? As someone who deserves to be loved or someone who grace has made possible to be loved?

A fourth trait of character is *knowing what God wants of us*. (2:3)

³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

How can we walk in the same path with another unless we know what path he is on? Knowledge of the other and what the other expects in a relationship is a major ingredient in fellowship. To walk with God it is imperative that I know Him and understand Him. It is shameful to see how little children of God actually know him. Very little time is spent in the studying of his word. I remember when I was a young Christian I loved to go to a Christian Book Store where I lived. In the 70's there was a BIG section on commentaries, dictionaries, concordances and other theological books. But when I walk into the same Christian Book Store today I see that this section has shrunk to a few shelves. The studying of the Bible has turned into: Christian fiction, self-help, cook books and the like lots of T-shirts, rings, mugs, dvd's, and of course the latest Christian 'fads'. But what is most important for true fellowship and walking hand in hand with the Lord has almost disappeared! This makes me think when Jesus cleaned the temple of its merchants. Shame on us for having commercialized the things of God! No wonder Christians are so weak in the faith! True fellowship will only come from a seeking heart filled with humility.

2 Chronicles 7:14

"if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

(NKJV)

This verse manifests God's heart concerning fellowshiping with Him. We need to call on the name of the Lord, humble ourselves and turn away from wickedness. Then, says the Lord, will he hear, forgive and heal his people. So knowing God and being humble will bring a harvest of fellowship.

A fifth trait of character needed to have fellowship with God is *'not to be a liar'*.

⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

Have you ever been lied to? All of us have but there are lies that hurt more than others. When a good friend lies 'straight to your face' and you know it, it really hurts. Think of Peter and how he lied to Jesus.

Matthew 26:33,34

(33) Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."

(34) Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

(NKJV)

When time came to take a stand and position himself with Jesus, Peter lied over and over again. Finally the rooster did crow and this is what happened:

Luke 22:60-62

(60) But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

(61) And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

(62) So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

(NKJV)

The eyes of Christ pierced Peter's heart. Can you imagine when Christ turned around and looked at Peter – how Peter felt having lied to Christ and also to those who had asked him if he knew Jesus? Was there any fellowship left between the two? Peter broke all ties with Christ – 'I do not know this man!'. How many times have we lied to God? How many broken promises have we made to him? We simply can not have fellowship with God if we live a life of lies.

A sixth trait of character for good fellowship is *obedience*. (2:5)

⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

How can a man walk with God when there is no desire to keep His word? Only a spiritual hypocrite would play such a deadly game! Not only does God want us to KNOW about him but he also desires for us to OBEY what we KNOW about him. As a child who knows the rules but does not act upon them - is not esteemed by his parents – so are we when we also do not obey. **Did you know that to obey the Lord is an act of worship and to disobey is an act of rebellion?** All who disobey instantly break any type of fellowship! That is why we must constantly search our hearts and when we find fault we must go to the throne of God for forgiveness and the re-establishment of fellowship.

Hebrews 4:14-16

(14) Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

(15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

(16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(NKJV)

God is willing to have fellowship with you. This only comes through the atoning work of Christ at the cross. Once you are his child by adoption make certain that you possess these traits of character to have true fellowship with your heavenly Father.

- Desire not to sin (2:1)
- Be actively repentant (2:1b,2)
- Be humble (2:1)
- Know what God wants of you (2:3)
- Don't lie to God (2:4)
- Be obedient to what you know (2:5)

FIRST JOHN
05 - 'No new commandment'
1 John 2:7-11

⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. ⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(NASB)

John begins this section by calling his readers *'beloved'*. This word in Greek is ADELPHOS which means: a brother (actual or not). It is not the word AGAPETOS meaning: beloved or dearly loved. What I can understand is that John called his brothers and sisters in Christ *'beloved'* because that is the way that he truly felt about them. One of the themes of his epistle is certainly loving God and loving the children of God so this goes hand in hand with what he writes. What an extraordinary and touching attitude John has. Just because they were 'born of the Spirit' they automatically were on his 'beloved' list. I wonder if we all are like John. Having this instant love for all who are in Christ.

⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

This 'not new commandment' John will be speaking of is a recurring theme – the one of truly loving others. He says that it is an old commandment. John does not bring a new revelation from the Lord but reminds the Christians of an old and fundamental one. This 'old commandment' is foundational for the Christian faith. We all know that 'God is love' (1 John 4:8,16) and that he has poured his love into the true believer (Eph. 2:4). It is natural then for the Disciple of Christ to live out this love that he has received. Notice that John uses the word, *'commandment'* on three occasions in one verse! The word *'commandment'* (ENTOLE) means: an authoritative prescription. This commandment to love others is not an option that we either choose or refuse to live by. It is an order given by the Most High unto all of his children. Actually having a loving attitude is proof that we are truly Disciples of Christ (John 13:35).

John also says that: *'the old commandment is the word that you have heard'*. To hear the word one needs someone to teach or preach the word. Blessed are those who persevere in studying the Scriptures and then teaching what they have learned. Christianity desperately needs people (at all levels) who have a ministry in teaching. They are the ones who 'pass on' to others the knowledge of God. Do you remember the exhortation of Paul to Timothy concerning the importance of teaching?

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

(NKJV)

Here we see four generations teaching the Word of God – Paul, Timothy, faithful men and others also. May we continue the important ministry of teaching others!

⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

How can John be writing an old commandment (v.7) yet say that he is writing a new commandment (v.8)? Don't forget that John often writes in a black-white fashion and that he uses opposites to explain certain themes. Loving others is not a new commandment for the Lord God had given it to his people in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18). But it is a new commandment in the sense that it has been renewed by God himself who had become flesh to walk with mankind (Heb. 1:11-3). This capacity to love others is given in Christ. Man is centered on himself and desperately needs the renewing of his mind and spirit to be able to love others.

John adds an encouraging statement: *'the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining'*. This darkness is passing away for those who are in Christ for his light is shining in the believer's heart. The Lord's light will dispel the darkness of this world. One day there won't be any need for the sun and moon because the light of the Lord will shine everywhere.

Revelation 21:23,24

(23)The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

(24)And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

(NKJV)

Whether it was in the Old Testament or in the New – love is the pinnacle of the manifestation of God’s character in the believer.

⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Once more we have two sets of opposites that recur over and over again in this epistle. This time it is the themes of light and darkness and love and hate. These two themes are to be seen everywhere around the globe in every nation, tribe, peoples, tongues, age groups, ethnicity and religion. There is a constant battle between darkness and light and no truce is possible.

Isaiah 29:15

**Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"
(NKJV)**

The Lord knows those who prefer darkness and hate. They may believe that they are unseen and unknown to others. They may believe that they are hidden and will never be caught. But they are only fools for no man is hidden before the Lord (Heb. 4:13). This is actually a test to see if we are in the faith.

⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

The word ‘*hates*’ (MISEO) means: to detest, persecute. We all have people in our lives that we do not necessarily ‘click’ with. We don’t have the same tastes, interests or general passions in life. We don’t hate them but we just don’t enjoy their company like we do with other people. They may be too bold, wild or outrageous for us. Others may be too calm and tranquil as though they have absolutely no energy or interest in anything else but science, math or astronomy. This is not what John is speaking about. He speaks about detesting people and even wanting to persecute them. Are there people that we don’t want to see, or don’t want to talk to? Are there people we would do anything not to be with? If in our hearts we find feelings such as these then there is darkness in us meaning that we are the opposite of what we should be. Paul writes the following concerning this.

Eph. 5:8

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light
(NKJV)**

Believers are no longer darkness but children of light. When we hate someone we 'blow out' the candle light that is in us.

¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

Verse ten is the other side of the coin of verse nine. One talks about being in darkness and the other abiding in the light. The word '*abides*' (MENO) means: to stay, remain. John is not talking about someone who loves his brother once in a while, or when he has to, or he is asked to. He speaks about those Disciples of Christ who constantly have love for others not when they choose or when it is an advantage for them or when it looks good to do so. But remain in God's love for others. Does this mean that you will love the person automatically? Not really! Sometimes we are called to love the 'un-lovable'. Do you remember the story of the two brothers who the father asked to work in the vineyard (Mat. 21:28-31)? The first one said 'no' but regretted it and went to work. The second said 'yes' but did not go! So who did the will of their father- the first one. Sometimes we can be like the first son, we don't feel like loving but we finally do and by doing so our Father is proud of us. What I would like you to notice is that when we are in the light there is something that happens '*there is no cause for stumbling in him*'. This means that as long as I honestly love others and manifest it I am a model for others. All that I do will encourage, build up and fortify others. I will not be a stumbling block or a an instrument of injustice. So where do I stand? Do I stand in darkness or in the light?

¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John ends this section with a warning that we should all hear loud and clear. If I hate my brother there are three things that will happen to me. The first is that 'I will be in darkness.' Have you ever been in a room that was pitch black or woke up in the middle of the night at a friend's house and didn't know your way around? It's pretty scary until you find a light switch. When I hate I am that person that is in darkness and feels around to find his way. In other words I am spiritually blind. It is the hate in me that blinds me. The second is that 'I don't know where I am going'. I might think that I know, I might be very certain that I know my way – but I actually am lost. I can be blind and know very well where I am. Countless blind people are very active in their lives.

But John says that when I hate I am not only blind I am also 'lost'! I have lost all bearings of where I am. How terrifying that must be! It's like being captured at war, being blind folded and brought somewhere you do not know! The third thing is that 'I am over powered by darkness'. I am no longer victor or master in life. I have 'sold out' to the enemy of my soul by hating others. He suddenly takes control and I become his puppet. This is how Paul writes it:

Romans 6:11-14

- (11)Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
- (12)Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**
- (13)And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**
- (14)For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**
(NKJV)

The questions I need to answer are the following: Am I living a life of love? Does God's love abide in me? Or have I become spiritually blind?

FIRST JOHN
06 - 'Children, young men and fathers'
1 John 2:12-17

¹²I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁵Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.
(NASB)

In this chapter we will continue to look at the importance of having a godly conduct in our relationship with God. As we have seen in our last study we have learned that to have true fellowship with God we need to reflect the Son and have the following traits of character.

- Desire not to sin (2:1)
- Be actively repentant (2:1b,2)
- Be humble (2:1)
- Know what God wants of you (2:3)
- Be obedient to what you know (2:5)
- Love others (2:9)

To be able to accomplish this there must be a separation in heart, thoughts and actions from the flesh and the things of this world that do not reflect God's mind. Over and over, we are taught in the Scriptures to get away from certain things, to abandon certain practices or to abstain from certain things. Here are a few reminders:

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 13:11

**When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child;
but when I became a man, I put away childish things.**
(NKJV)

James reminded the believers:

James 4:4

**Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
(NKJV)**

Peter exhorted:

2 Peter 1:5-8

**(5)But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,
(6)to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,
(7)to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.
(8)For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(NKJV)**

We are told to make every effort to abstain from the following:

- Idols (Acts 15:20)
- Sexual immorality (1 Thes. 4:3)
- Every form of evil (1 Thes. 5:22)
- Fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11)

The Corinthians had difficulty with their conduct in regards to holiness, they were rather 'living in the flesh'. That is why Paul wrote the following:

2 Corinthians 6:16-17

**And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."
Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, *And I will receive you.*"
"I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."
(NKJV)**

When you become a child of God through your second birth a conduct SEPARATE from evil has always been called for! Now to come back to our text, we see that in verses 2:12-14, God has a different word depending where you are in your spiritual life. Here we see God gives to each according to his spiritual capacity. I am reminded of the parable of the talents in Mat. 25:14-30. To the first worker he gave five, the second two and the last worker only one. The master gave his workers monies to multiply according to their ability. I rejoice in knowing that my Lord does not over burden me with things that I am not capable of handling.

¹²I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Some Christians were little children in the faith others were young saints, still others were older and mature but for each “type” children, young or old in Christ – the Lord has some encouragement. I am certain that if you are a child of God you will fall into one of these three categories. May you receive what God has for you!!As for the *children* in the faith this is what is written:

(12) I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

(13) I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

To the *children* in the faith John has two reminders that should encourage them in their conduct. These in turn have a beneficial effect on their fellowship with God. The first that he states and the greatest in my view of things is: ‘*your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake*’. This is what the gospel is all about. This is the wonderful news that Christ had been sent to proclaim and to perform. You and I were enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), dead in our trespasses (Eph. 2:1), children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), and we were lost sheep without a shepherd (Jer. 50:6). We were heading for an eternity of darkness far away from the giver and sustainer of life, this is called the second death (Rev. 2:11; 20:14). BUT God showed mercy and offered forgiveness. This is not cheap grace, its cost was incalculable! How do you place a price on the death of the ‘Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world?’ (John 1:29). May all who understand the grace given unto them be forever grateful and serve the Living God.

What I would like for you to notice is the fundamental reason why your sins have been forgiven in Christ Jesus. Did God make himself a people (both in the Old and New Testament) because of these people themselves? Did God save me because of MY worth or because of anything in me? Dear friend, in the last century salvation has been turned around. Man has become the focus of salvation – as though we did God a favor for saving us! We are so precious, so important, so worthy. This is not what John writes.

(12) ...because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

It was *'for His name's sake'* that our sins have been forgiven. One of the best commentaries I have read on this verse comes from 'Exposition of the whole Bible' by John Gill. This is what he wrote concerning this phrase: *'because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake; these little children had been sinners by nature and practice, and were not now without sin, but they shared in the blessing of the forgiveness of it; which arises from the abundant mercy and rich grace of God, and proceeds on the blood and sacrifice of Christ; and therefore is said to be "for his name's sake"; not for the sake of any merits in men, any services or works of theirs, but for the sake of Christ, his blood, sacrifice and satisfaction; and it reaches to all sins, original and actual, secret and open, past, present, and to come; and here intends the application of it by the Spirit of God, and the reception of it by faith: and which, as it is a reason and argument encouraging love to God, who freely and fully forgives, and to Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sin, so to their brethren and fellow Christians; who are equally sharers in the same blessing, and when they should love, because they are loved of God and Christ; and whom they should forgive, because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them.'*

In Isaiah 48:9 God tells his people he will not 'cut them off' because of his name's sake. In Ezekiel 20:9 God said that he brought his people out of Egypt for his name's sake. In Ezekiel 20:44 it is written that God did not dwell according to his people's wicked ways because of his name's sake. God acts towards his people because of his name and for his own glory. God does not owe mankind anything! He is the Supreme Being and no one has any rights or authority over him. He acts as he wills and no one can contest against him. Remember what Paul wrote:

Rom. 9:18

**Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.
(NKJV)**

The second encouragement given to the 'little children' is the following:

(13) I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

A fascinating and often forgotten verse concerning coming to know the Father is the following.

Mat. 11:27

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

(NKJV)

How far are we today from what the Holy Scriptures tell us! We can not know God like we can know how to cook, or build a cabin or repair indoor plumbing. If I want to know something I just go 'on line' and do some research. But I can not do that with 'knowing' God. I can certainly know of God (as I did before being born-again). But being able to know God personally (as my Father) this I can never do alone! Jesus said: 'Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, *and the one whom the Son wills to reveal Him*'. Jesus needs to reveal the Father to us and he does so ONLY if he wills. Knowing the Father as it is written in verse thirteen is an indescribable grace given to whom God pleases. This is what John wanted the 'little children' to remember. As for today if you are truly a child of God – have you forgotten that you were saved for 'his name's sake'? Being reminded that our sins are forgiven and that we now can call God "Father" should change our conduct. We ought to have a desire to separate ourselves from darkness and stay close to the light! The grace that we have been given to be forgiven and to know God should be kept in our minds and hearts.

As for the *young* in the faith this is what is written:

(13) ...I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

(14) ...I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Overcoming is the theme for the 'young men'. Overcome (NIKAO) means: to conquer, prevail or get the victory. In both verses (13 and 14) the young are reminded that they have become victorious over the 'evil one'. Who is this 'evil one' that John mentions? The 'evil one' is a combination of two Greek words (PONEROS & PONEROTEROS) which mean: hurtful in effect or influence and also more evil, more wicked. This is Satan and all he represents. Those who are in Christ Jesus have victory over Satan and his kingdom of darkness. We know that they have 'passed from death unto life' (1 John 3:14) and from the power of darkness unto the kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13).

Before they were slaves of sin and now they have become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:17,18). When ‘*word of God abides in you*’ then victory is granted. May we rest in God’s living word, may it be the very foundation of our life. For this is our victory over the evil one.

As for the *fathers* in the faith –the mature Christians, he wrote this:

(13) ...I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

(14) ...I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

One may wonder why John writes the same thing to the *fathers* twice – the mature Christians and not two different things as he did with the children and the young in Christ. One answer just maybe that old saints just have to be reminded in whom they know! As time passes, as life rolls on believers can sometimes forget their origins. They can do things and act spiritually without any true link to God. They can automatically pray, sing, have ministries without having a true love for Christ as though he has become a shadow in the background. This reminds me of what Christ said to the believers in the church of Ephesus:

Revelation 2:2-4

(2)"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

(3)"and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

**(4)"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.
(NKJV)**

John may be writing the same thing twice because he does not want the older saints to forget where they come from and what Christ had done for them. Have we forgotten the mercies we have received? Has our life gone cold towards our Lord? Could Jesus say to you – ‘you have left your first love?’

In verses fifteen to seventeen, John will continue to show how separation in conduct may be obtained. Here he will speak of four enemies to a changed conduct. Knowing God produces changes in a believer’s life the ‘evil one’ will do what he can to interfere and bring disgrace unto the Lord’s name. He certainly does not want you to be victorious!

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

The first enemy towards a changed conduct is the world and the things of the world.

(15) ...Do not love the world nor the things in the world.

This is the first directive, our hearts should be fixed on the Lord and not this world. Jesus reminded his listeners the impossibility of doing both:

Matthew 6:24

**"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
(NKJV)**

To have and keep a changed conduct our hearts must be placed in the Lord's hands. We can not be serving both the Lord and this world. Do you remember Demas who was a fellow worker with Paul (Phm. 1:24)? Paul had kind words concerning him (Col. 4:14). But at one point he fell into the snare of the world – he began to love it and all it could give him.

2 Timothy 4:10

**for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.
(NKJV)**

There is also the story of John (also known as Mark) who had been on a missionary trip with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:25). For some unknown reason he abandoned his ministry and leaves Paul and Barnabas. Later on (Acts 15:36-39) Barnabas wants to take him again on a missions trip but Paul refuses! The dispute was so vigorous that Paul and Barnabas went on in different directions! The reason John-Mark left must not have been a good one since Paul did not want him back. The good news is that it seems that John-Mark was rehabilitated because in 2 Tim. 4:11 he is once more praised by Paul. We all need to be very careful and not let the things of this world have predominance in our life. Remember what Jesus said:

Mat. 6:21

**"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
(NKJV)**

The world is an enemy and will not rest until you have surrendered your sword and shield to its feet. John wrote it so eloquently:

1 John 2:15

**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
(NKJV)**

The second enemy towards a changed conduct is:

¹⁶For all that is in the world

All men have cravings – sudden desires, illicit desires, they have to be faced and won! These cravings come suddenly and often for no apparent reasons. They “pop-up” in your mind without any notice and push you towards something – some type of urge overpowers you! They also want to drive you far from the Lord God and will do so by making you fall into sin. To live a separate life you must identify these cravings when they occur and deal with them right away. If not they will overpower you and bring a feeling of shame and defeat in your life. This can be understood as a ‘general statement’. This is a bit like a bag that you put different things in. The world offers so many ‘good things’ that it sometimes it is difficult to perceive what is not recommendable. There are things that are borderline almost in a grey area. We need to be careful and use wisdom when certain choices are to be taken.

The third enemy towards a changed conduct is:

(16) ...the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes

Lust is certainly one of our greatest enemies. Whether it is lust of the flesh or lust of the eye it is devastating. The eye is the gateway to the “heart” – we all know that! Jesus said the following concerning our eyes:

Matthew 5:29

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

(NKJV)

Matthew 6:22,23

(22)"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

(23)"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

(NKJV)

Your eye have to be under the Lord's authority – how swift it is to stray away from holiness! It may be looking at the hot apple pie and wanting another piece when you know you are already full. It may be that dress that caught your eye and you just can't get it out of your mind. So many innocent things just grab our attention and yet they enslave us! Job, as with most men, had to "take over" because his eyes wandered around:

Job 31:1

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?

(NKJV)

We can not be separate for God and have the blessing that come with close fellowship if we do not master our eyes! This is what they should be seeking.

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

(NKJV)

The final and fourth enemy towards a changed conduct is:

(16) ...and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

How can we ever walk along with God if we take his glory? Far too many Christians would prefer to have the spotlight shining on them! Big ministries, big churches, big budgets, big numbers. Their faces and names are to be seen everywhere in the Christian world. Others boast because of their accomplishments, possessions, families, employment, great marriage, books they have written and so many other things. Pride literally kills any relationship with the Lord. Remember what the Lord God said.

Isaiah 48:11

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.

(NKJV)

God will not give his glory to another, neither to you and I. When I give myself glory instead of giving it to God – then true fellowship is impossible! Or when I glory in what I have or have not done – while leaving the Lord outside – then harmony & fellowship is broken. For all of us who desire true fellowship with God – separation is needed, separation from darkness and sin. God in his grace tells us of four enemies that will work against this desire. These are:

The love of the world
The cravings of sinful man
The lust of the flesh and the eyes
The boasting of what one does

One final thought is given to encourage us to live for God and not for the present things of this world.

¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Think of it, all things pass away, so why live for them? Jesus said:

Mat. 24:35

**Heaven and earth will pass away,
But my words will never pass away.**

(NKJV)

I pray that through these lessons we will live better separate lives for God by changing our conduct! Would you also make this your prayer!

FIRST JOHN
07 - 'Many antichrists'
1 John 2:18-20

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.
(NASB)

One can wonder if John continues speaking to different groups of Christians (children, young and fathers) as he did in chapter six. I do not believe so because this time his exhortation is for all the Christians. It is something that all need to know and understand. I believe that his two main subjects desperately need to be understood by all of us today.

John begins with the word '*Children*'. In our last section he spoke to the children and calls them this but John actually used two different Greek words to describe these '*Children*'. In verse 2:12 the word for 'children' is TEKNION which speaks of an infant but is also used for new Christian converts – infants (new) in the faith. In verse 2:13 the word for 'children' is PAIDION which speaks of half grown boy or girl but it is also used in the sense of an immature Christian. Immature does not always mean that they lack wisdom or that they are foolish. It may also describe a Christian that is growing but is still young in his faith. This, I believe, is the group of people that John is writing to presently. They needed the following instructions contrarily to the older in the faith. In the following two verses there are three subjects that John desires to teach these Christians.

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

The first deals with time(*last hour*) and events (*the antichrist*)that coincide with specific time periods. You see God's plan deals with human time and is divided into different time-periods. I remember in High School a normal day was divided into time-periods (four in the morning and three in the afternoon). Each time-period was for a different subject or activity. As the day progressed the students went from one time-period to another. Then the final bell rang and the day was over!

Here John speaks of *'the last hour'*. In God's time-period there was now nothing lacking for the return of the blessed hope of every born-again believer – Jesus Christ. His redemptive ministry had been fulfilled, he had risen from the grave and ascended into the heavens. The promised Holy Spirit had been given to all believers so that they would not be left orphans.

John 14:16,17

(16)"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever

(17)"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

(NKJV)

The next step in God's schedule was the return of Christ to gather his Disciples and meet them in the air (1 Thes. 4:16-18). This would open the door for the coming of the Antichrist and his short rule on earth. So, as John writes *'it is the last hour'*. John wasn't the only one who taught that they were in the end-times, so did Peter.

Acts 2:17

'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

(NKJV)

Peter spoke of *'the last days'*. He was referring to the promise of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the believers. Since Pentecost we are actually *'in the last days'*. There is nothing lacking for the rapture of the church to meet its Savior. So what will happen in the *'last hour'*?

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

The first thing is the knowledge that THE antichrist is coming. The Scriptures affirm that one day the antichrist will have authority on earth. He is called the Antichrist because he stands against all that Christ is. Notice that there is one antichrist but many antichrists. The one antichrist *is coming* but the many antichrists *have appeared*. The two must not get mixed in our understanding. The following is taken from the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia concerning the antichrist who is also called 'the man of sin' by the apostle Paul.

The name occurs in Paul's remarkable announcement in 2Th 2:3-10 of the manifestation of a colossal anti-Christian power prior to the advent, which some of the Thessalonians had been misled into thinking of as immediately impending (2Th 2:2). That "day of the Lord," the apostle declares, will not come till, as he had previously taught them (2Th 2:5), there has first been a great apostasy and the revelation of "the man of sin" (or "of lawlessness"; compare 2Th 2:8), named also "the son of perdition" (2Th 2:3). This "lawless one" (2Th 2:8) would exalt himself above all that is called God, or is an object of worship; he would sit in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God (2Th 2:4). For the time another power restrained his manifestation; when that was removed, he would be revealed (2Th 2:6-7). Then "the mystery of lawlessness," which was already working, would attain its full development (2Th 2:7-8). The coming of this "man of sin," in the power of Satan, would be with lying wonders and all deceit of unrighteousness, whereby many would be deceived to their destruction (2Th 2:9-10). But only for a season (2Th 2:6). Jesus would slay (or consume) him with the breath of His mouth (compare Isa 11:4), and bring him to nought by the manifestation of His coming (2Th 2:8). This antichrist is to come (is coming) and he has not yet arrived. In the past people even thought that the Pope, Nero, Hitler, Napoleon and even Saddam Hussein were the antichrist! But all have come and gone. Let's not fall in to the category of those who reveal what God has not revealed!

(18) ...even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

This section of the verse should catch our eye. It states that '*many antichrists have appeared*'. John is telling his readers that there are people – right now – that have the same attitude and desires as the antichrist. There are people that are ferociously against all that Christ stands for! In his Gospel John speaks of the light that has come into the world (1:1-5). He writes that the light was not welcomed. In 1:5 they did not comprehend him. In 1:10 they did not know him. In 1:11 they did not receive him. Some, more than others, will have nothing to do with Christ. An example of this would be Demetrius in Acts 19:24-29. He stood up and spoke against the work of God. He defended Diana the goddess of Ephesus and the commerce made because of her. A riot started and they seized Gaius and Aristarchus two of Paul's co-workers. Today there are antichrists (those who mock God and stand against him) everywhere. Open your eyes and you will soon see. Have listening ears and you will be astounded at all the lies that people say concerning Jesus of Nazareth. False prophets, teachers and leaders they can be found on television, the internet and radio. They also have religious buildings on street corners across the world. They teach religion and not true Christianity. This is what Jesus had to say about them:

Matthew 7:15-20

- (15)"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.**
- (16)"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?**
- (17)"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.**
- (18)"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.**
- (19)"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**
- (20)"Therefore by their fruits you will know them.**
- (NKJV)**

So beware, it is not because someone call himself a Christian that he or she really is. The world is flooded with self-proclaimed men or women of God who are at actually the service of Satan. He has blinded their eyes and they and their followers will both fall (Mat. 15:14).

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

This is a controversial verse and many would like it to be struck out of the Scriptures! This verse speaks of what we call 'the persevering of the saints'. Today what is called 'cheap grace' abounds in churches. To be saved all you need to do is: ask Jesus to come into your heart, raise your hand, come forward, say the following sinners' prayer, or sign on the bottom line. The Billy Graham Association says that up to 90% of those who come forward at an evangelical campaign never really become Disciples of Christ. Never become part of a living church. Remember the words of Jesus:

Matthew 7:21-23

- (21)"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**
- (22)"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'**
- (23)"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**
- (NKJV)**

The persevering of the saints is disliked because it separates the true from the false, the sheep from the goats, and the light from the darkness. When one is saved he bears fruits that is the will of God – the Son for his disciples (John 15:1-8). When fruit is not apparent there is something **terribly wrong** because it fulfills a sign of being a true believer.

When someone says that he ‘accepted Christ’ in Sunday school when he was seven and lives ‘in the world’, I would seriously doubt his so-called salvation. Why do I say this? Because when salvation occurs God changes everything in his child and God gives you a new identity! You now have become:

- The salt of the earth and light of the world (Mat. 5:13,14)
- A child of God (John 1:12)
- Part of the true vine (John 15:11-5)
- Chosen and appointed by Christ (John 15:16)
- A slave to righteousness (Rom. 6:18)
- A joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17)
- A temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)
- Part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27)
- A new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)
- A minister of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18,19)
- One with Christ (Gal. 3:26-28)
- A saint (Eph. 1:1)
- The handiwork of God (Eph. 2:10)
- Righteous and holy (Eph. 4:24)
- A citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20)
- Hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3)
- Light and no longer am I of darkness (Col. 5:5)
- A partaker of a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1)
- Part of a new chosen race (1 Peter 2:9,10)
- An enemy of the devil (1 Peter 5:8)

When God brings salvation into your life he does not leave you as you are. Because what you are (your sinful way of life) is what brought Jesus to the cross! God changes your entire being and you now have a new way of thinking – we now have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). I fear that a great multitude will have a colossal surprise when they will open their eyes on the ‘other side’. They will not be where they thought they would be! What about you my friend has your life been turned upside-down since your salvation experience? If you can not say that this is YOUR reality, if you do not really desire to seek the kingdom and justice of God, then I would question the reality of your salvation.

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

Here John splits the group in two. The first group are ‘the THEY’ (verses 18,19) and the second group are the ‘YOU’ (verses 20,21). I believe that John is writing what is the fundamental difference between those who are really saved and the others. The ones that are really saved ‘*have an anointing from the Holy One*’. Those who are truly saved have been given the Holy Spirit. Here are some of the things we are told about the Holy Spirit in relationship with the believer:

- Promised by God (Acts 2:33; 38)
- He is a gift from God (Acts 10:45)
- Received when you believe (Acts 19:2)
- Has been poured in our hearts (Rom. 5:5)
- Your seal unto salvation (Eph. 4:30)
- He dwells in the believer (1 Tim. 1:14)
- The one who renewed you (Titus 3:5)

Having the Holy Spirit living in us will change our entire life. Our desires and outlook will no longer be the same. Our thoughts and aspirations will be modified. Our hearts and minds will become new. Our eyes will now be set upon heavenly things and not the things of this world. This is what Paul calls the renewing of the mind.

Romans 12:1,2

(1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

(2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

(NKJV)

To grow and to glorify the Lord we need to allow ourselves to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and let him clean up our hearts and minds. God has not saved us so that we continue to live in the bog of sin as the apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 6:4-7.

Having died with Christ believers are no longer slaves of sin but rather freed from it.

FIRST JOHN
08 - 'Who is a liar?'
1 John 2:21-25

²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.
(NASB)

The first verse in our section really destroys the modern day thoughts of many. I have noticed that many Christians who are of a certain age in Christ suddenly stop studying the Word. Before they took courses, attended Sunday school, went to conferences and even had personal time with the Lord's Book. But now they have all but stopped 'growing in the Lord'. As though they have gotten to a point of being satisfied with knowing the person of God. They have somehow become disinterested in what God has to teach them. They have forgotten the words of their Savior:

Matthew 4:4

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
(NKJV)

I remember when I was a young Christian – ALL brought their Bible to church events. Today a great number leave them at home. I believe that it manifests a lack of attachment and love of the Word of God. John tells us that he wrote to them not because they did not know *'the truth'* but rather *'because you know it'*. John is reminding them things that they had heard before. We need to be reminded about the things of God. His oracles, commandments and promises are there for our taking let us not refuse ourselves the benefits of reading and studying the Bible.

John says that *'and because no lie is of the truth'*. If there is one thing that we can rest assured of is the truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures. God is light and he will never lead anyone astray into obscurity. Quite the contrary he has come in the flesh to lead us away from the powers of darkness. This is a promise given by Christ himself:

John 8:12

**Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
(NKJV)**

God is not a liar (Heb. 6:18) and he will never lead us astray. Have you ever thought of the reassurance believers have in his written Word? The Bible will never lie to us but rather bring light and truth to our path. One can not say 'I walked when it was light yesterday so I can safely walk in the night tomorrow!' The person still needs light for his guidance and safety today and every day that follows. So John is reminding the believers concerning God and so we also need to be reminded.

²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

In our last chapter John spoke concerning the antichrist and also the many antichrists that were living in his day. The antichrists he spoke about were those who were not true believers but acted as if they were and finally came out and left them. They simply could not live a life that only the Holy Spirit can produce in a believer. John now speaks of the antichrist and one of the main character traits that he will have. John wants his readers to know what the coming antichrist will be like so that when he comes they will not be fooled.

The first trait is that he is a liar. Have you noticed that in verse twenty-one it is written that there are no lies in the truth! When the antichrist will come he will deny that Jesus is the Christ, the long awaited Messiah! The Son of Perdition will oppose all worship but of himself and will sit upon the throne in the Temple of Jerusalem and proclaim that he is God (2 Thes. 2:3,4). Who is the father of all lies if not Satan himself! Those who follow him have the same trait of character for the apple does not fall far from the tree. Remember what Christ said about him?

John 8:44

**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.
(NKJV)**

Satan has lied from the beginning. He first lied to Eve in the Garden and he will continue to lie until the very end when he will assemble an army to fight against the King of kings (Rev. 20:7-10). Today many have the spirit of the antichrist and become antichrists themselves. There are two statements that John gives us so that we can identify those who are antichrists. The first one is *'who denies that Jesus is the Christ'*. Take time to study the theology of a religious group before you consider them to be true believers. There are many out there who say that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah in Hebrew) but when you dig a little deeper you soon realize that what they mean is: Jesus and.... saves you. Jesus and religion, Jesus and church rules, Jesus and purgatory, Jesus and money, Jesus and sacrifices, Jesus and good deeds, Jesus and prayers and we could go on and on. When a religious group (whoever they are) ADD anything to the work of Jesus as a way of salvation then they are antichrists.

The second statement is *'who denies the Father and the Son'*. Now the word: *denies* (ARNEOMAI) means to: contradict, disavow or reject. The antichrist and anyone who has his spirit will openly and willingly reject the Father and the Son. Some reject Father and Son by simply saying that they do not exist others by replacing them with idols (1 Cor. 8:1-6). Again we need to understand the theology of others so we can identify those who are offspring of the antichrist. Even if these groups seem honest, caring and loving if they deny the Father and Son or deny the Father but accept Son or accept the Father but deny Son – they are of the antichrist. Never get involved with them except if you have an opportunity to evangelize them.

²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Here we see that John stresses the point that you can not have one when you deny the other. Since the Son and the Father are 'ONE' (John 10:30; 17:22) they are inseparable and whoever tries to separate them loses both! The relationship of both Father and Son is manifest in the New Testament and is important not only to them but also to the true believer. Here are some reasons why.

- Jesus will confess us to the Father if we confess Him (Mat. 10:32)
- Jesus will deny us to the Father if we deny Him (Mat. 10:33)
- All who do the will of the Father is a brother or sister of Christ (Mat. 12:50)

In these three examples (and there are so many more) we see that our salvation is determined upon us accepting both the Father and the Son. The Father will not give righteousness to anyone except if his relationship with the Son is appropriate. We also see that if we do not do the will of the Father then we can not be a brother or sister to the Son.

They truly are one. Coming back to our text John affirms that if you deny the Son then you do not have the Father but if you do confess the Son then automatically you are accepted by the Father.

²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.²⁵ This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

Here John separates those who have the spirit of the antichrist and the Disciples of Christ. So what are we to do in the event of meeting people who deny either the Father, the Son or both of them? John's answer is simple '*let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning*'. We always need to come back to what we know to be the truth. What does the Bible say? Even in John's day there were people coming with new ideas, new views or new revelations concerning God and his Word. They are the ones with the spirit of the antichrist.

In his last letter Paul reminds Timothy of what John is reminding his readers concerning being grounded and never turning away from what they first believed in. Listen to his exhortation to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:1-5

- (1) I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:**
 - (2) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**
 - (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**
 - (4) and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**
 - (5) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**
- (NKJV)**

The importance of *abiding* (MENO): to stay, remain, and continue is fundamental to John. He uses this word three times in verse twenty four. You see what we have received from the beginning (the truth from God) that opened the door to our salvation is to be cherished forever! Abiding in the truth (the Word of God) will automatically make us abide in the Father and the Son. When the truth is taken away so is our fellowship with God. That is why we can not live in spiritual lies and hypocrisy and at the same time have peace with God. Jesus told his followers that the truth will set them free (John 8:32) not lies!

²⁵ This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

This is the last phrase of our section. It speaks of three things: a promise, a people and eternal life.

A promise can be accomplished only if the giver has the ability to do so. I could promise you health, but I do not have the ability, or power if you prefer, to guarantee my promise. Religion can promise you forgiveness, felicity, nirvana or heaven but none has the power to deliver what they say. Only the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God the creator and sustainer of all things, the giver of life can and will keep his promise. Do not be fooled by the sooth-saying of those who have the spirit of the antichrist. Their words are as smoke in the wind, dispersed to the four corners of the earth!

The promise is given to all – NO! Read again, the promise is given ‘*to us*’. The ‘us’ are the Redeemed, the children of God, those who have received salvation through the atoning work of Christ by repenting towards God. Not everyone is saved – we are not Universalists. There will be a separation between those who belong to God and those who do not (Mat. 25:31-46). Have you received the promise of salvation? Is your name written in the book of life? Has Christ died in your place? Have you repented unto salvation? You can only be either a sheep or a goat – saved or unsaved. There is no ‘neutral ground’, it is either heaven or hell. Friend if you are not certain and you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to repent unto God – do it! Stop your reading, close the book and open your heart and cry out to God for salvation asking Christ to save you from the coming judgment.

Finally what is the promise given – ‘*eternal life*’. This is not the first time that John writes concerning ‘*eternal life*’.

- In John 3:15 we are given the key to receive eternal life (whoever believes).
- In John 3:36 we are given the certainty of having eternal life (has eternal life) and also the certainty of judgment if we do not believe (the wrath of God abides upon him).
- In John 6:40 we are given both the certainty of salvation but also of our resurrection from the dead.
- In John 6:47 we have Jesus’ personal promise of eternal life if we believe.
- In John 6:57 we are given the source of eternal life – the Son.
- In John 17:1-3 we see that eternal life is a gift from the Father to the Son to give to whoever believes.

May we remember the immense favour God has given us to receive eternal life through his beloved Son. May we live to honor and glorify His holy name.

FIRST JOHN
09 - 'These things I have written'
1 John 2:26-29

²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

²⁸ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame, at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

(NASB)

In this last section of the second chapter of first John our writer tells us the aim of what he has just penned. He wants to teach, warn and protect his brothers and sisters in Christ. We may forget that the Disciples of Christ are in a spiritual war and the enemy of our souls is searching to render useless the Disciples of Christ. John was not the only one to write concerning the impending dangers in Christian living Peter also reminded his readers of the threat against them.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

(NKJV)

If John was the last apostle to be left standing he had lived long enough to have seen all of his eleven other 'brothers at arms' die at the hands of those who had a spirit of the antichrist. Deception is at the very heart of this last section.

²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

As I said *'those'* are the ones John had just finished writing about in our last chapter. They are either the antichrist or those who have his spirit (ways of seeing things) who are called antichrists. The desire of these false teachers and prophets is simple, they want to *'deceive'* true believers. Now the word *'deceive'* (PLANAO) means: to roam, go astray, err or seduce. They try to pull you away from the Lord and cause you to accept their teachings as being the truth. The first example of this may be the best of all. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent (Satan himself – Rev. 20:2) deceived Eve into believing that God actually had

lied to her and wanted to keep her from having his best (Gen. 3). When God asked for an account of her behavior this is what Eve said: ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’ (Gen 3:13). The way of conducting his warfare has not changed. Believers are still his targets and deception is still the means of wounding them. The word ‘*deceive*’ is used many times in the New Testament. It is used by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is also used by Paul, James and Peter. It is actually mentioned fifteen times in the gospels, fifteen times in the epistles and eight times in Revelation. Remember that still today (if not more than ever) there are people out there who aim to deceive born-again believers and lead them astray.

²⁷ As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Who is the ‘Him’ in verse twenty-seven? If we just look at this verse it could easily be either the Father or the Son. We know that both Father and Son are instrumental in the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Son asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) and the Father sends the Holy Spirit to his children (John 14:26). So if you read 1 John 2:26 with the Father or Son in mind it technically works out. But that doesn’t answer ‘who is the Him’ in verse twenty-seven. So what do we do? The only right thing to do is to look at the context and by doing so we have the answer. In verse twenty-eight we read that it is Jesus-Christ (as we will see later). This is a great lesson for all believers. Many are the times that a verse is taken out of its context and taught as a spiritual truth. That is one of the reasons why we have so many different churches across the world. We all should study the Word of God both in its original language and context. If this would be done by every believer (and it is our duty to do so) then they would be liberated from false teachers and preachers. Remember what Jesus said:

John 8:32

**“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
(NKJV)**

The anointing that is mentioned is the very person of the Holy Spirit. God has given his Spirit to his children. Paul tells us that receiving the Holy Spirit is at the time of our salvation (Acts 19:2). He also tells us that if we do not have the Holy Spirit we do not belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). It is interesting to notice what Paul writes concerning the anointing (Holy Spirit) that believers have received in 2 Cor. 1:21,22 and 5:5. In both cases Paul writes that the Holy Spirit in the believer is a guarantee (ARRHABON). This word means: a pledge, payment in part as a security for the rest. The anointing in the believer guarantees his future with God. Paul says that ‘we have been sealed for the day of redemption’ (Eph. 4:30).

What comfort and joy it is to know that God will keep us safe and sound until it is time for us to be with him. I am so glad that it is God that guarantees my future and not myself! If I were to ‘work’ or ‘keep’ my salvation I would fail every day because I sin every day!

Because believers have the Holy Spirit living in them we are told that *‘you have no need for anyone to teach you’*. Does that mean that believers have no use for reading, studying or learning the things of God? Why have the Bible then if the Holy Spirit will teach me all that I need to know? Just asking the question offers the answer! Of course we need to be reading, studying and learning – we are told over and over to do so. So what does John mean? This is in relationship with the teachings of the antichrists who refute that Jesus is the Christ (2:22-23). John had no need to teach them these things because they already knew them. They had been saved by the ‘Good News’ and the Holy Spirit was reminding them concerning Christ. They did not need to be taught by the antichrists but rather keep what the Holy Spirit had placed in their hearts.

Another point worth looking at is the phrase: *‘the anointing which you received from Him abides in you’*. The word *abides* (MENO) means: to stay, dwell or remain. The Holy Spirit DOES NOT come and go as he did in the Old Testament times. When a person believes unto salvation he receives the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This promise was accomplished on the day of Pentecost when all the disciples were given the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 2:1-3). The believer can lie (Acts 5:3), resist (Acts 7:51) and grieve (Eph. 4:30) the Holy Spirit but he can not lose the Holy Spirit for he has been sealed by the Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13). Our relationship may be strained because of our sins. If so we need to repent of our sins and desire to abandon them.

²⁸ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame, at His coming.

Once more John uses the term *‘little children’*. It is not the Greek word (PAIDON) which means: immature. But rather (TEKNION) meaning a young Christian convert. If this comment was directed towards the younger believers it is something that all believers should remember. We should all *abide* (MENO) in him (Christ Jesus), we should all remain or stay in him. God is not something that we ‘add on’ to our life. Or that we ‘take time’ with once a week. He is creator, sustainer, master, the giver of life to whom we owe ALL THINGS from our very breath to our material possessions. In other words he is the one who permits us to be alive. He should be everything to the believer and we should desire to honor and glorify him above all else. He should be number one in every aspect of our life. So how is your abiding? Are you walking along-side of him? Are you presently on the narrow path? Is he guiding you and are you following him?

Why are believers called to *abide* in him? One of the reasons is because of his appearing. Christ will come back this is a promise that has been given.

Acts 1:9-11

(9)Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(10)And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

(11)who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

(NKJV)

Christ will come back to get his Bride (the true believers) and one of the things that will happen before is what is called the Tribunal of Christ. Paul speaks of this in Rom. 14:10-12. Here we are taught that we will have to give an account of ourselves to God. In another passage found in 2 Cor. 5:9,10, we are taught that we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

(NKJV)

Believers are called to *abide* in Jesus because we will give an account of all that we have thought and done. Nothing will be hidden away from Christ we will be naked before him. This is how the writer of Hebrews puts it:

Heb. 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

(NKJV)

Abiding in Christ will make it possible for the believer to do two things. The first is '*we may have confidence*'. This word (PARRHESIA) means: frankness or assurance. Will you have the assurance, the confidence to stand upright before the Lord? Will there be anything that you will not want Jesus to 'bring up'? Will you be blushing at what he will bring about you concerning your life on earth? We are told to *abide* in Christ so that we will have confidence when time come to meet Him face to face.

The second thing that *abiding* brings is to '*not shrink from shame*'. This word (AISCHUNO) means: disgrace or to feel ashamed. What an awful feeling to have when we will see Christ. In this intimate moment of seeing our beloved Savior some will feel disgrace and shame. All of this because of their wasted life, their refusal to walk close to Jesus. Because of the wrong choices or priorities you had in life, placing pleasure of the flesh before walking in the Spirit. As I write these lines I know that I also will have things to give an account for and will certainly not be proud of certain chapters of my life. What we now can do is decide to *abide* in Christ and not allow the enemy or the flesh to create a wedge between us and our marvelous Savior.

²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

In other words we are called to understand who Christ is and what flows from his person. This is yet another verse that proves his deity (for all who deny it). He is *righteous*. This Greek word (DIKAIOS) means: to be absolutely just and holy in character or action. There is not even a hint of sin or darkness in any aspect of God and this is exactly what is said of Christ Jesus. Being perfectly just and holy in character or action is God's standard. John tells his readers that this is also a standard that should be found in the believer. Not that we can ever be perfectly holy in thought and action but rather that a person who practices these Godly standards (righteousness) is '*born of Him*'. This word (GENNAO) means: procreate, be born or bring forth. In other words those who actually live God's righteousness are born of Him. Keep in mind that John has just spoken of the antichrist and the many antichrists that were among them. They were not living God's righteousness because they were denying who Christ was.

May we ever be grateful for the immense grace that has been bestowed on those who have come to the cross for salvation. May we walk in a way that manifests God's righteousness. May we search to please the Lord and to imitate his beloved Son as Paul teaches us.

Ephesians 5:1
Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.
(NKJV)

FIRST JOHN
10 - 'God's love for us'
1 John 3:1-3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
(NASB)

The apostle John is painting a canvas of God's loving relationship with those who have trusted Christ as their Savior. The '*us*' in verse one is referring to those who have become Disciples (followers) of Christ. The '*us*' is not to be taken as a universal inclusiveness of all of humanity. John's desire is for the Christians to understand the unbelievable and immeasurable grace they have received. The word '*see*' (EIDO) means: to know, be aware or consider. John is asking his readers to reflect on the grace they have been given to know the Father, through the Son by the Holy Spirit who has enlightened them. I wonder if we take enough time to ponder on who we have become and what has been given to us? What '*has been bestowed upon us*'? The Father's love. The word '*bestowed*' (DIDOME) means: to give. The meaning is very simple but so deep that most of humanity does not understand it.

Redemption is a gift from God to whoever believes (John 3:15,16; 12:46, Acts 10:43, Rom. 9:33;10:11, 1 John 5:1). Most believe that redemption is something that you need to earn by working for it. Paul wrote it this way:

Titus 3:4-7

**(4)But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
(5)not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
(6)whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
(7)that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**
(NKJV)

All religions basically teach the same thing. God is good and you are corrupt because of your sins. You can (or might) be forgiven because of your good deeds, following the rules, giving alms, self-sacrifice, prayers and so forth.

What religion does not tell you is the amount of all these things you have to do in order to be forgiven! So you live your life never being able to say 'God has forgiven me'. Christianity tells people that 'God is good and you are corrupt because of your sins'. Then the Bible adds: 'God loves you so much that he came and walked with us as Christ Jesus. He went to the cross and took upon himself your personal sins (John 3:16). Forgiveness can now be given because Christ has paid the price and penalty of your sins at the cross. God freely gives redemption to all who repent and believe that Christ died in their place. What John desires the Christians to reflect upon – is God's love for them.

I must say that the word '*great*' is not in the original. It is placed there to emphasize the vastness of God's love. The subject of verse one is God's love and also what God's love actually does to the true believer. In some spiritual manner that is beyond our understanding God's love actually transforms the new believer into a new person.

2Cor. 5:17

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
(NKJV)**

The love of God transforms or should I say re-creates the person into a different type of creature. No longer called a 'child of Adam' he is now a 'child of God'. He is separated from all the other human beings. His destiny is now different. John adds '*and such we are*'. There is no doubt about it, no 'it all depends' and no 'you have to keep on keeping on or you'll lose it'. Believers have definitely and permanently crossed from the power of darkness unto the kingdom of his Son (Col. 1:13) – AMEN! May we forever be grateful unto our heavenly Father!

(1)... For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

This echoes other statements that can be found in either the gospel or the epistles of John. Far too many Christians want to be appreciated and accepted by everyone they see. They have forgotten the warnings that Christ has given his Disciples.

John 15:20

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (NKJV)

Persecution is part of the Disciples life (2 Tim. 3:12). Those who have rejected the Son will automatically reject his followers. Those who hate the Son will also hate his Disciples (Mat. 10:18,22; 24:9).

Are we willing to accept this aspect of being a Disciple or are we ‘closet Christians’? In this last part of the verse John explains why there is so much hatred for those who believe in Christ. Simply because *‘it did not know Him’*. The world does not know Jesus, they have rejected him (John 1:4,5,10,11). Let this also be a reminder for us who believe. It is normal that some people out there will have little to do with us because they have rejected the Light of the world.

² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

John continues to speak about what the love of God does to his children. He confirms once more that those who have faith in Christ Jesus to save them from judgment to come are definitely children of God – *‘now we are children of God’*. But the thing with the children of God is the following:

(2)...and it has not appeared as yet what we will be.

If we take two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H²O) we will instantly see the outcome of this union – water! But this INSTANT transformation is not found in the child of God. This makes the separation of those who believe from those who do not sometimes difficult. Jesus explains how similar yet different the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one are.

Matthew 13:27-30

(27)"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

(28)"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

(29)"But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

(30)'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

(NKJV)

Tares and wheat are similar until harvest time comes and it is so with some children of God. There are those who have a close walk with their Lord and those who constantly need shepherding because they are easily led astray. In either case they never become what they are meant to be as long as they are here on earth.

So if believers are not instantly what they should be (because we continue to sin) when will this happen? When and what will I be transformed into? What is the ultimate goal that the Father has in store for his children?

(2)...We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

As for the 'when' believers will become what they are meant to be is '*when He appears*'. Here John is referring to Jesus Christ. When Jesus will appear (and it could be today) all those who have received salvation through him will be transformed. For those living on earth at that time it will be at the rapture of the church. For those who are 'asleep in Christ' it will be when they open their eyes on the other side of eternity. One way or another each and every child of God will pass through this final transformation. Has Jesus not said that after the resurrection people will be 'as angels' (Mat. 22:30)? The reason for this final transformation is that '*we will see Him just as He is*'. This is not explained but when the believers' eyes will look upon their Savior they will finally and totally become Christ-like. What a wonderful day this will be when we will no longer be a slave of sin but instead have a willing heart to serve the one who gave his life for us.

³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If you are a born-again believer I am certain that you wrestle with your sins and your failures. You have all kinds of good intentions, you are sincere in desiring to abandon your iniquities. You honestly try to walk on the 'narrow road' but once in a while you take an exit to the 'broad road' (Mat. 7:13,14). You feel ashamed, turn to God and confess and you know that his promise is that he does forgive (1 John 1:9). Once more you get up only to fail over and over again. Paul writes of his own sins, failures and struggles in his life in Rom. 7:14-25.

In verse three John speaks of '*everyone who has this hope fixed on Him*'. What is the believer to do until he has fully been transformed into the image of his Savior? Are we to despair or hibernate from the world? Are we to abandon our faith seeing the lack in our own self? Absolutely not! What believers are to do is to keep their eyes on Jesus. John says that he is our hope of final transformation. He carries in himself all that we can hope for. Jesus is the hope of Israel (Acts 28:20), our hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5), the hope of our calling (Eph. 1:8), the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23), our hope of glory (Col. 1:27) and our hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). But this hope can only become alive and real in our daily life when we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

When a Disciple fixes his eyes on Christ it is written that he *'purifies himself'*. How can this be? When we are in close union with God we then walk in the Light. And as long as we walk in the light there is no darkness in what we do. We are purified (HAGNIZO) meaning: to make ceremonially or morally clean, to sanctify. As we draw closer to the Light darkness flees from our hearts and we are purified. It is not me that purifies myself but rather the Light that I have approached that purifies me. Only God can inwardly cleanse me from my iniquities.

This living hope in Christ is to become as Christ – *'just as He is pure'*. Believers will never become A Christ but rather AS Christ. The Son is a perfect reflection of the Father (Heb. 1:1-3) and so will believers become a true reflection of the Son. This is our deepest hope.

FIRST JOHN
11 - 'Sin and Lawlessness'
1 John 3:4-8

⁴Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.
(NASB)

John begins a new subject here: the issue of sin and the practice of sin. It is natural that he does so after he wrote so eloquently concerning the love of the Father towards his children. It is normal for the receiver of such love to desire to please the Holy One who bestowed upon him such grace as to be called a child of God. The subject of sin is laid out before us in almost every page of the Holy Writings. If it were not for sin we would not be in a fallen state and would have no need of a Savior (a bit like Adam and Eve before the Fall). The redemption story is all about sin, our need for a Savior and the love of God. Since sin is in every one of us (Rom. 3:23) and sin causes us to rebel against God (Rom. 7:8-11) we should be very attentive to what is brought before us in this section.

⁴Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

The first word indicates that John is speaking to all of us, whether we are saved or not. All commit sin either in thought or in action. We are all guilty of sinning against God (Rom. 3:19) and we sin continually. But before we continue let's define what sin is. The American Tract Society Dictionary defines sin as the following: 'Any thought, word, desire, action, or omission of action, contrary to the law of God, or defective when compared with it.' When I read this definition I understand that I am almost in a perpetual state of sin and why is that? It is because my very nature is sinful. I commit sin because sinning is in my very nature. Since I am a fallen being my mind is fixed on things that are in opposition to what is holy.

Gal. 5:17

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
NKJV

Paul speaks of his struggle with sin. When I read what this great man of God (in human standards) says about the place of sin in his life I very humbly understand why sin has a grasp on myself being who I am.

Romans 7:18-20

(18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

(19) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

(20) Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

(NKJV)

This is my story and probably yours also (if you know you are a sinner). How I desire to do what is right and just before the Lord on one hand and how I miserably fail on the other. Sin is attached to the believer and we will be delivered from sin only when we are with Christ because we shall be transformed into his image.

The word '*practice*' is mentioned four times in our small section – that's a lot! I have searched far and wide to FIND a good commentary concerning the fourth verse, especially focusing on the word '*practice*'. There are not many commentators that really place importance on this word and I was very surprised and disappointed. Because I believe that the word *practices* is key to understand this section. I was so happy to discover what Pastor David Guzik wrote in his commentary of First John concerning this word. I have taken the liberty to reproduce this section for your benefit.

a. **Whoever abides in Him does not sin:** Since *sin is lawlessness*, a disregard for God ([1 John 3:4](#)), and since Jesus came *to take away our sins* ([1 John 3:5](#)), and since in Jesus *there is no sin* ([1 John 3:5](#)), then to **abide in Him** means to **not sin**.

i. It is very important to understand what the Bible means - and what it does not mean - when it says **does not sin**. According to the verb tense John uses, **does not sin** means *does not live a life style of habitual sin*. John has already told us in [1 John 1:8](#) *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. In [1 John 1:8](#), the grammar indicates John is speaking about occasional acts of sin. **The grammar of [1 John 3:6](#) indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued lifestyle of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection.**

ii. "The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence" (Stott); the NIV has the right idea when it translates these verbs with phrases such as *keeps on sinning, continues to sin, and he cannot go on sinning*.

b. **Whoever abides in Him does not sin:** John's message is plain and consistent with the rest of the Scriptures. It tells us that a life style of habitual sin is inconsistent with a life of abiding in Jesus Christ. A true Christian can only be temporarily in a life style of sin.

i. Paul's teaching in Romans 6 is a great example of this principle. He shows us that when a person comes to Jesus, when his sins are forgiven and God's grace is extended to him, he is radically changed - the old man is dead, and the new man lives. So it is utterly incompatible for a new creation in Christ to be comfortable in habitual sin; such a place can only be temporary for the Christian.

ii. In some ways, the question is not "Do you sin or not?" We each sin. The question is, "How do you react when you sin? Do you give into the pattern of sin, and let it dominate your lifestyle? Or do you humbly confess your sin, and do battle against it with the power Jesus can give?"

iii. This is why it is so grieving to see Christians make excuses for their sin, and not humbly confess them. Unless the sin is dealt with squarely, it will contribute to a pattern of sin that may soon become their lifestyle - perhaps a secret lifestyle, but a lifestyle nonetheless.

iv. What is important is that we never sign a "peace treaty" with sin. We never wink at its presence or excuse it by saying, "Everybody has his own sinful areas, and this is mine. Jesus understands." This completely goes against everything we are in Jesus, and the work He has done in our life.

⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Amen to verse five! For if it were not for Christ we all would be in our sin and the consequence of our sin would still be upon us. John writes that Christ came *'in order to take away sins'*. This reminds me of the story of the scapegoat that we find in Lev. 16:5-10. Two goats were to be taken by Aaron: one for the Lord and one as a scapegoat. The sins of God's people were placed on one goat and it was offered to the Lord for the benefit and forgiveness of the people. The other goat (scapegoat) was presented before the Lord and set free. This is a picture of what Christ does for the believer – it is called a 'type' of Christ in the Old Testament. As with the first goat the sins of the believer were placed on Jesus at the cross and he was sacrificed in our stead. The second goat (scapegoat) represents the forgiven people who are brought before the Lord and set free. John writes that *'in Him there is no sin'*. Another amen because if Christ had sinned, his sacrifice at the cross would have meant nothing. The sacrifice demanded was to be perfect in every way. Just one 'small sin', one 'white lie' or 'neglect' on Jesus' part and there would have been no hope for our redemption. But blessed be God – the Son, his sacrifice was perfect and its effect eternal!

Hebrews 10:10-14

(10)By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(11)And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

(12)But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

(13)from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

(14)For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

(NKJV)

Believers have been made perfect and forever because of God's constant sanctification. Have you thought of the meaning of this lately? Does this make your heart rejoice? And has this transferred unto a deep desire to honor the Lord through your life and be a living testimony of his grace in your life?

⁶No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

The word '*abides*' (MENO) means: to continue, dwell, remain. This verse seems to contrast verse four which deals with practicing sin. Here we have the opposite – dwelling in Christ. When we practice sin we practice lawlessness and when we abide in Christ we cease to be lawless (or a rebel). Why is this so? When a Christian is far away from the Lord (and we have all seen this) he lives a lifestyle that rejects the morals of God. He lives in the 'flesh' and does the desires of the 'flesh' which is enmity against God. But when the Christian walks 'hand in hand' with his Savior he lives a life that bears 'good fruit' (John 15:4,5) and by doing so we cease to live a life of lawlessness. The idea behind '*no one who sins has seen him or knows him*' is speaking of one who continuously lives in sins. We all sin but we do not all love our sin or desire to pursue sin. A normal Christian will be struck in his conscience after sinning and will repent before the Lord. He will have a desire to put an end to his sin and will fight against it. He will fail (unless he receives a special grace) but he will rise up once more to walk in the light. In short when we 'stay' in Christ we walk in the light but when we 'stay' outside of Christ we walk in darkness. The whole idea is that the person who states that he is a Disciple of Christ and manifests a walk that bears the fruits of the flesh he is either a liar or a carnal Christian (1 Cor. 3:1-4) who needs to repent.

⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

In verse seven John makes it really simple to understand. He first states that there is a possibility that a believer can be *deceived* (PLANA) meaning to cause to roam from safety, truth or virtue. Believers can be led away from the truth, just read my commentary on the book of Galatians (or any other) and you will see that this was exactly what had happened to them.

Gal. 1:8

**But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.
(NKJV)**

The Galatians were being led astray by false teachers who had slipped into their congregations. Paul warns the believers that if anyone, even angels, come with a different gospel let them be accursed.

Galatians 3:1-3

- (1) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?
(2) This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
(3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?
(NKJV)**

These verses are just as strong for we see that the Christians had been mesmerized into believing that another way of walking was even better than the one they had first received. And this is also true of the 21st century Christians, all of us if we are not very careful can be led astray from the truth which is revealed in the Bible. The apostle Peter wrote it this way:

2 Peter 3:17

**You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;
(NKJV)**

Paul also wrote a warning to the believers of Corinth concerning their own falling away. They even believed that they knew better than Paul!

1 Corinthians 10:12

**Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
(NKJV)**

We all need to be very concerned with our daily walk with the Lord. As we have seen in 1 Cor. 10:12 we can one day think that we are standing strong and tall in the Lord only to find ourselves a short while later having once again fallen.

⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Once again the word *'practice'* (POIEO) means to abide or agree. So when we (saved or not) agree or abide in sin we automatically reflect the devil. A person may not willingly or automatically say 'I want to do this because that's the devil's way!' But even when it is an unconscious action it still reflects the devil's darkness. I remember many years ago I went to St-Louis, Missouri with my wife to see missionary friends living there. We were brought to the old port by the river and the pathway was made of old bricks. I found a little broken piece and took it home for a souvenir. When my friends saw what I had they said that I needed to put it back because it was against the Law to do so! I didn't know I had broken the Law yet that didn't take away the judgment I could have incurred if I had been caught by a law enforcement officer. This is a picture of what I am trying to portray of what is written in verse eight. When we practice sin we reflect the devil. But, as we have seen, a true believer does not continue in a sinner's life style, he may fall but he repents and once more walks in the light.

John ends with a comforting phrase. The purpose of Christ's coming was *'to destroy the works of the devil.'* The word *'destroy'* (LUO) means: to loosen, break up or dissolve. In other words Jesus has come to conquer the enemy and put an end to his rampage here on earth. This will be totally accomplished when the time will come that he will be sent with his angels into hell for ever.

Rev. 20:10

**The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
(NKJV)**

FIRST JOHN
12 - 'Born of God'
1 John 3:9-12

⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

¹¹ For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.
(NASB)

Verse nine is pretty rough to take if you only read one verse of the entire Bible, especially if you only have it in English! When you read the verse you even find that there seems to be an error. Let's take a closer look.

⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

What is meant by '*born of God*'? We have to come back to the gospel of John in his famous chapter three to perfectly understand. Remember the meeting between Nicodemus and Jesus? Even before Nicodemus has the time to ask him a question Jesus tells him the following:

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
(NKJV)

When Nicodemus asks him how this can be Jesus answers:

John 3:5-7

(5) Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

(6) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

(7) "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'
(NKJV)

Being *'born of God'* is simply another term for what Jesus meant by *'being born-again'* (3,7) or also *'being born of the Spirit'* (6). John is speaking of the supernatural spiritual birth that is given to those who have repented unto God for salvation. The word *'repent'* (METANOIA) means to think differently, reconsider, a change of mind. It is always used for repentance of sin in the New Testament except in Luke 17:3,4 where it is a man that repents towards another man. The very foundation of our spiritual life is passing through the second birth. The first birth is our physical birth and the second is our spiritual birth by being *'born-again'*. Without this second birth there is ABSOLUTELY NO true spiritual life between you and God. You can go to church, do acts of kindness, give large sums of money for charity, live a life of sacrifice, abstain from the pleasures of this world or anything else – you are still spiritually dead. Do you remember these words of Christ concerning this?

Matthew 7:21-23

(21)"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

(22)"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

(23)"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

Prophesying, casting out demons and doing signs and wonders DOES NOT mean that you are born-again or close to God. Jesus said that one day he will tell these people: *'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'* (23). So are you really born-again or are you *'playing church'*? Are you just a nice person or have you been declared a child of God? This is the most important question you will ever have to answer in your life. Where you will spend the entire eternity depends on having or not having a spiritual birth. And the only way to have it is to repent unto God of your sinful life and to turn to Christ for forgiveness.

John continues by saying that those who are *'born of God'* do not practice sin. Earlier we have seen this declaration. Remember that the word *'practice'* (POIEO) means: to abide or agree with. A child of God will not continually abide in sin. He will fall in sin, repent and once again fight against it. He will not dwell in it or say how wonderful it is to sin against God. He will commit sins but his attitude towards his sinning will have changed. He will no longer glorify himself in it quite the opposite he will feel guilty before God and wholeheartedly ask for forgiveness. Now why does he not *'practice sin'*? Simply because the seed of God *'abides in him'*. The word *'seed'* (SPERMA) means: something sown or offspring. God has sown something in his spiritual child and that is the promised Holy

Spirit. Each and every child of God has the gift that had been promised and given freely since the day of Pentecost. You see the child of God does not abide in sin BUT the seed of God abides in the believer. Actually the Holy Spirit will remain in the true believer until the very end of his life here on earth. Paul said it this way:

Eph. 4:30

**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
(NKJV)**

The second part of this verse seems to 'go against the grain' it even seems to say the OPPOSITE of the first part! What is meant by:

(1)...and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

John has already told us that we all sin (1 John 1:8,10). He also says that when we do sin and confess it then God is faithful and just to forgive and cleans us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). How can he now say: *and he can not sin*? We must remember that being born of God has not fully changed the believer yet. The seed of God is in him but he is still trapped in the flesh with his old nature warring against all that is holy. One day when we will be fully sanctified to the point of glorification then and only then will we sin no more. This is how John Calvin (1509-1564) explained this section in his commentary on 1 John.

He says that they *sin not* who are born of God. Now, we must consider, whether God wholly regenerates us at once, or whether the remains of the old man continue in us until death. If regeneration is not as yet full and complete, it does not exempt us from the bondage of sin except in proportion to its own extent. It hence appears that it cannot be but that the children of God are not free from sins, and that they daily sin, that is, as far as they have still some remnants of their old nature. Nevertheless, what the Apostle contends for stands unalterable, that the design of regeneration is to destroy sin, and that all who are born of God lead a righteous and a holy life, because the Spirit of God restrains the lusting of sin.

Thomas Coke(1747-1814) explained it this way in his commentary on 1 John.

The phrase, *He cannot sin, because he is born of God*, cannot signify an impossibility to sin: for, in that case, St. John, and the other apostles, needed not to have taken so much pains to guard real Christians against sinning; to have condemned, forbidden, and threatened; or to have exhorted, commanded, and promised. These things plainly suppose not only the possibility, but the danger there was of true Christians falling away: by *cannot*, therefore, we may here understand, that he will not, he does not choose to live wickedly; it is contrary to his principles and the settled bent and habit of his temper and life.

Since both the seed of God (Holy Spirit) and God - the Son dwells in the believer and since they are perfect and holy and thus can not sin the regenerated part of the believer also can not sin. It is the un-regenerated part (the flesh and the old man) that pushes the believer to sin. Only when we will be transformed (glorified) will we stop sinning.

¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Before God the world is not divided by race, language, sexual identity or anything else you might think of. The world is simply divided in two: you are either a child of God or a child of the devil. There is no neutral ground, you are either on one side or on the other. John gives the obvious sign that you belong to the 'dark side'.

(10)...anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Notice the word '*practice*' again (to abide or agree). The children of the devil do not abide or agree with righteousness (DIKAIOSUME) which means having equity of character. Their character is twisted, warped and perverse. It can 'make believe' for a little while (just as a child of God can fall into sin for a little while) but he will soon come back to who he really is – a child of darkness. The second sign of being a child of the devil is that he does not love his brother. Most of the people I know love (PHILEO) each other. This word simply means to have a certain affection for others. In the Bible we are never commanded to love (PHILEO) each other but rather to love (AGAPAO) each other. This word describes the attitude of God towards his Son and the human race. What John is saying is that the child of the devil will never have the attitude or the mind of God towards others. He will never truly love others like God loves them.

¹¹ For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

This section ends with an example of what a child of God and a child of the devil look like. It didn't take long after the fall for sin to settle in the hearts of mankind. Cain and Abel were the first naturally born humans on earth (along with their siblings). One was a child of the devil while the other was a child of God. The new message that is given by Christ is that we should love (AGAPAO) one another. In other words the true believer will have a very special way of looking at other people (whoever they might be).

They will look at them as Christ did and will desire the best for them. Now Cain killed his brother Abel. It is written that Cain *'was of the evil one'*. Now why did he kill him?

(12)...Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Cain is the perfect example of a child of darkness because what he did is exactly the opposite of what is written in verse ten. First he did not practice righteousness and second he did not love his brother. Quite the contrary he did the most atrocious thing possible – he killed him. He killed because the works of his brother were righteous and his were not! Do you remember the story – it's worth remembering.

Genesis 4:1-8

(1)Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."

(2)Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

(3)And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

(4)Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

(5)but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

(6)So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

(7)"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

(8)Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

(NKJV)

The righteousness of Abel was that he offered the right sacrifice unto God (the firstborn of his flock) and Cain didn't (the fruit of the ground). This is a perfect image of true righteousness. Cain offered the fruit of the ground. Remember that the ground had been cursed (Gen. 3:17) so the offering that came from the ground was also naturally cursed. On the other hand Abel offered an animal. Remember that after Adam and Eve had sinned God clothed them with tunics of skin (Gen 3:21). Blood had to be shed and death occurred so that the children of God could be clothed in a way that hid their sinfulness. This is a type of Christ (the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world – John 1:29,36) that was to come. He died so that our sins could be hidden away in him.

FIRST JOHN
13 - 'Loving in deed and truth'
1 John 3:13-18

¹³ Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

(NASB)

Isn't it wonderful to get a surprise! Out of nowhere you land up being celebrated, or winning a prize or receive a special gift. You may have had a 'surprise party' for your birthday where everybody shouts 'SURPRISE' when you get in. Surprises are great – but not all the time. You may get a diagnosis that surprises you and you need immediate care. Or the people from the revenue agency send a 'surprise' letter and you are being audited. John speaks of a spiritual surprise that every Disciple of Christ receives – some type of hatred from others because they bear the name of Christ upon them. This is how Paul explained it to Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:12
Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.
(NKJV)

What this verse tells me is that when I live like I should – reflecting the person of Jesus or bearing the light of the world if you prefer – I will cause reactions around me. Some people might appreciate it while others simply won't. This verse also tells me that it is normal that this happens and that I should not refrain from being Christ-like because some will not appreciate this.

The word 'surprise' (THAUMAZO) means to marvel at or wonder. So John is saying do not wonder about the fact that some will hate you. As Disciples of Christ we simply need to accept it – it is a fact of spiritual life. It is not our Godly given mandate to make certain that everybody likes us. Christians need to stop worrying that they might be disliked by some even if it's family. Jesus had warned his disciples long before John wrote his first letter.

John 15:18-20

(18)"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

(19)"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(20)"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

(NKJV)

Here Jesus affirms that the world will hate his disciples but he also tells them why – *it hated me before it hated you (18)*. It is evident that not everybody hates Christians and Jesus tells them why this is so – *'If they kept my word. They will keep your also' (20)*.

The word 'hate' (MISEO) means: to detest, especially to persecute. People who hate are people who persecute the ones they hate. They don't just leave them alone – they do what they can to oppress them. The perfect example of this is Saul who hated the Christians so much that he did all he could to eradicate them from the earth. This is Paul's own testimony concerning his hatred for Christians before he was himself saved by God's grace.

Acts 22:4

"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

(NKJV)

So if you are in one way or another persecuted because of your stand for Christ it only means that the world hates the light that they see in you and rejects it (John 1:11). We are never told to stop being the salt and light of the world – even when the world hates us.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

This is a very strong theme that John presents to his readers – the love of the brethren. It seems that it the cornerstone of our Christian life. When Jesus was asked by a scribe what was the greatest commandment this was his response:

Mark 12:28-31

(28)Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

(29)Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

(30)'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

(31)"And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

(NKJV)

Have you noticed that Christ not only gave the scribe the answer to his question but he also added '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*'. In reality Jesus is summing up the entire Law with these two commandments. Is it important that John reminds his readers the significance of loving their brethren? Absolutely. Is it also important that WE are reminded of the importance of loving others around us? Absolutely. Truly loving (AGAPAO – having the attitude of God) is the proof that we have been born again or as John writes '*passed out of death into life*'. This phrase teaches us that even though we thought we were alive (as I did before God saved me) I actually wasn't (spiritually speaking). This is difficult to believe but it's what the Scriptures teach. Paul wrote:

Ephesians 2:1

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins

(NKJV)

Ephesians 2:5

even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

(NKJV)

Col 2:13

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

(NKJV)

There is no doubt about it we were all DEAD before the second birth was given to the repented believer. So do I now live as a resurrected person, having the mind of Christ alive in me (1 Cor. 2:16)? Is love the word that characterizes who I am? Has my outlook on others really, drastically changed for the better?

If love is not what people see in me then there is something terribly wrong with me and I need to address it. Only two things can be the cause of my lack of honestly loving and being concerned for others. Either I am not saved at all or I am backsliding (a carnal Christian). One way or another I need to confront myself about this issue.

This is so important that John warns his readers of two things the first is:

(14)...He who does not love abides in death

We have seen the word '*abide*' (MENO – continue, dwell, remain) over and over again and once more John hits the nail on the head. If I do not love then I am dwelling in the web of death. I may think I am alive but I am actually not. True life is only found in Christ Jesus (John 1:14, 11:25, 14:6).

The second is the following:

¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

In verse thirteen John spoke of people hating the believers in Christ. Now he speaks of those who say they are believers but hate others! In both cases the word '*hate*' (MISEO) means to detest, especially to persecute. Unfortunately history is full of pages of so-called Christians who hate non-Christians and persecute them. Even during the Great Reformation Christian factions would hate other Christians who did not think exactly like they did. They even went to war against them and all of this in the name of Christ! How awful to think that it is acceptable to hate a certain 'type' of believer in Christ because their theology is not precisely our own. Remember what Jesus said concerning our enemies and those who persecute Christians?

Matthew 5:44,45

(44)"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

(45)"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

(NJKV)

If I hate my brother it only manifests that I am a murderer deep down inside. If I always hate others it only manifests that I really do not have life in me and that I will not be with Christ in eternity.

¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

John will now speak of the opposite of hate which is love. Our last three verses each have the word 'love' in them. Each verse also shows us a different aspect of what true love is. So let's look at them.

¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

First of all true love is laying our own life down for the sake of others. The ultimate example is that of Christ who voluntarily gave his life at the cross. No one forced Christ to do this. Jesus said that he lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:15). He also said:

John 10:18

**"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."
(NJKV)**

So as Jesus laid down his life for others we are reminded that all Disciples of Christ are also told to lay down their lives for others. This is the most difficult thing that can be asked of anyone. To set yourself aside and live for others. Has Jesus not said that 'anyone who desires to follow him must deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow him' (Mat. 16:34)? Am I the center of my life? Are people at my service? Do I think that I deserve more from others? If I answer 'yes' to these questions then I am not laying down my life for the brethren.

¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

If the first aspect of true love is setting ourselves aside for the benefit of others the second has to do with our possessions. What John is saying is that if I have the capacity to help others yet I choose not to, then love is not abiding in me. If I constantly close my eyes to the real needs of others (food, shelter, clothing) then I am living in death. Imagine if Christ would have closed his eyes to our spiritual need and poverty?

We would all still be in our sins and have a judgment waiting for us. How can we say we abide in Christ if we turn our head and pretend not to see the needs of others? Once again this is a sign that should make us wonder if we truly are in Christ. Do I accumulate needlessly while I know that others are in want?

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

This is the third aspect of love – loving with action and not only with words. There is an old saying that says: ‘Put your money where your mouth is’. This means ‘do what you say’. Many can say ‘yes’ to helping but never show up, ‘yes’ to volunteering at church but are chronically absent. They may even place their names on a list but when they are contacted they find a way to be ‘busy’ or have ‘an important meeting’ and just can’t make it. A person who keeps his word is a rare commodity these days! A person you can count on day in and day out is worth his weight in gold. We are told not to play ‘pretend’ but to really, really ‘roll up our sleeves’ and get to work for others.

So how is loving others being lived out in your life? Am I abiding in love or in death?

FIRST JOHN
14 - 'We are of the truth'
1 John 3:19-24

¹⁹ We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him ²⁰ in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

²³ This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

(NASB)

There are few things that we can be certain of in life. Some and some sarcastically say that only death and taxes are a sure thing! If we were to look back on our life how many things have happened to us that we never thought could happen! But on the other hand there are things in the spiritual world that we can be assured of and one of these things is the fact that we have become children of God.

¹⁹ We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

John writes that we can *'know that we are of the truth'*. It is an indescribable feeling to be certain of your salvation. I remember that I was a conference speaker in a Christian Camp and one night around the campfire a lady came to me and told me she was not certain of her salvation. She had been taught that she could lose the redemption Christ had given her at the cross, that she needed to do all she could to 'hold on tight' and 'walk straight'. Naturally she had an immense weight on her shoulders that she could not bear. Whoever had taught her these lies reflected exactly what Jesus said:

Luke 11:46

And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

(NKJV)

She had a burden on her shoulders that she could not bear. NO ONE can bear the burden of their sins. NO ONE can become righteous before God by keeping the Law (Gal. 3:11). So this poor woman was so conscience of her sins that she was crumbling under them.

Instead of enjoying her salvation she was devastated. So I took her aside and told her the wonderful news that Christ had accomplished everything in her stead, that his sacrifice was perfect and eternal and that it was a free gift from God. When she understood this everything changed instantly and for the rest of the week she was gleaming with joy. The problem was that she did not know that she was in the truth because of her spiritual birth. She had been kept enslaved by these false teachers but the TRUTH liberated her (John 8:32) and it will also liberate you.

(19)...and will assure our heart before Him

The truth of God, the one John is speaking about will bring a supernatural *assurance* (PEITHO) meaning: to convince, pacify or assure. It is the word of God that will convince the new believer that he is in the truth. The word of God will pacify the troubled heart. This will happen only if you apply your faith to it. In Mat. 8:26 Jesus said the following:

Mt 8:26

But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

(NKJV)

You see when we lack faith in God or his words fear seeps in our hearts just like with the disciples caught in a storm on a boat while Christ was sleeping. God wants to '*assure our hearts before Him*'. The heart is figuratively used in the Bible as the seat of our thoughts, feelings and mind. So do you know that you are in the truth? Are you in the truth? Has Jesus truly become your personal Savior? If you are not certain, drop this book and turn to Christ for forgiveness, repent of your sins and give your life to the one who gave his life for you!

²⁰ in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

John tells the believers that their hearts will condemn them and actually includes himself along with them. Have you noticed that when we become of the truth (are saved) we are much more sensitive to our sins? We suddenly realize things that never bothered us before. Our hearts suddenly condemn us for this and for that. What is happening? The Holy Spirit is manifesting to the believer the darkness that lies in them. When this happens if the believer is not very careful or does not know and believe the truth of the Word of God he may be crushed by the weight of his sin. Here John tells us that wherever our hearts condemn us there is someone who is GREATER than that condemnation – God!

We have become sensitized to our sins! May we also become sensitized to God and what he says about our sins.

I am so happy that God *'knows all things'*. I don't have to play 'spiritual games' with him. I don't have to play 'make believe' like I did when I was a child. God knows me, he sees through me. He knows my very thoughts even before I have them! There is a wonderful feeling of security because even knowing all that I am with all my failures God manifested his uncompromising love for me.

Romans 5:8-11

(8)But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(9)Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

(10)For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

(11)And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

(NKJV)

So God is greater than our heart that condemns us. The truth of God is that there is forgiveness, total forgiveness because of what Christ has done on the cross – he was the perfect and eternal sacrificial atonement for you and I which cleanses our conscience.

Hebrews 9:14

how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

(NKJV)

Hebrews 10:10

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(NKJV)

Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

(NKJV)

Some of the most beautiful verses concerning the heart of God in relation with our eternal salvation can be found in the book of Hebrews. The following two makes my heart bless the Lord God (emphasis added).

Heb. 8:12

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."
(NKJV)

Heb. 10:17

then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."
(NKJV)

If your heart condemns you remember that, as a child of God, your sins have been placed on Christ and he has paid for them in full. Always be thankful for the grace that you have received and manifest your love to your Redeemer.

²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

John will explain the importance of having a heart that does not condemn us and it has to do with our prayer life. When our hearts do not condemn us it is written that we have confidence (PARRHESIA) meaning: frankness, assurance, boldness. With a heart that does not condemn us we can be frank and bold before the Lord. Do you remember when Adam and Eve first sinned against the Lord what did they do when they heard him coming in the garden? They hid away from him!

Genesis 3:8

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
(NKJV)

They had lost their assurance and boldness – they fled to where they thought they would be out of God’s sight! Their hearts knew that something was wrong, that they had disobeyed the only law God had given them(not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil). When we sin and our hearts trouble us we also feel ashamed before the Lord and it’s just ‘not the same’. We feel condemned because of our conscience and until we repent we just can’t stand before the Lord as we wish we could. John tells us that when

we can stand before the Lord we then can receive what we ask of him. BIG question, does that mean that we can ask anything of God and he will automatically give it to us? The answer of course is NO. James writes it this way.

James 4:1-3

- (1)Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?**
 - (2)You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.**
 - (3)You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**
- (NKJV)**

Asking to satisfy the flesh will not be favourable before the Lord. Even when Jesus prayed in the most intense battle of his life he prayed so:

Luke 22:42

saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

(NKJV)

When we pray it must be concurring with the will of God and also with the timing of God. 'Not my will, but yours, be done'. That should always be with our thoughts when we pray.

John says that the Father will answer our prayers when we do these two things:

- (22)...because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.**

We need to keep his commandments and we will see what he is speaking about shortly and also '*do the things that are pleasing in His sight.*' That simply means to live a life that pleases him. Walking in the Spirit is in contrast with walking in the flesh which means walking in the light and not darkness or walking as a living sacrifice with a renewed mind and not as we did when we were still spiritually blind. Walking in a way that pleases the Lord can be understood by the idea behind this verse:

Job 1:8

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

(NKJV)

Being blameless and walking upright, fearing God and shunning evil is precious to the heart of God. Not only who we are is important before the Lord but also how we walk before him. As a parent we all understand this. Being the parent of a child is one thing but being a PROUD parent is another – right! God can be our Father but he can also be a proud Father. So walk in the Light and ask not for the flesh but according to his will.

²³ This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

In verse twenty two John says that the Lord answers us because we keep his commands and in verse twenty three we see what he is talking about. The first command is that *'we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ'*. Again we see that everything begins at the cross. The cross of Christ is at the very center of human history. It divides time: before and after, it will also divide people: the goats and the sheep. It will finally divide eternity with or with God, heaven or hell. So the first step is becoming a child of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The second step is *'love one another'*. That speaks of our outlook on the people that surround us. We have spoken about this earlier in my commentary. Having the mind of God and seeing things as he sees them concerning people has a lot of weight before the Lord. I can not expect God to answer my prayers if I don't have a loving attitude towards others.

Proverbs 21:13

**Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.
(NKJV)**

What happens when I believe unto the name of Jesus and I love others?

²⁴ The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Well we see that the believer dwells (MENO): continues, remains in God and God in him. So I live in God and God lives in me. And we see that the testimony of the Holy Spirit confirms all of this because he also is in us as a gift when we were born again. May we desire to abide in the One who has loved us as no one else can!

FIRST JOHN
15 - 'Testing the spirits'
1 John 4:1-6

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

(NASB)

When I read these verses it is as though they were written for the believers of the 21st century – and in a real way they were. The so called ‘Christian’ world is presently flooded with all types of people who are self-proclaimed ‘men and women of God’. The problem with them is not only their lies but the fact that they thrive on different types of social Medias. Like cancer cells that flow through your body because they are in your blood system these false prophets spread their ‘gospel’ throughout the world. If you open your television they are on ‘religious programming’. If you go on the ‘net’ you can find them in a blink of an eye. If you go to a book store, shelves are filled with their views. They preach and teach their social gospel where mankind is the center of the universe and God is just there to fill your dreams and make you the person you want to be. The gospel of health, money and egoism is spreading like wildfire and has been for several decades. The new trinity is Me, Myself and I – it’s all about me. What is really frightening is that millions upon millions of people are mesmerized and follow these false teachers. What we have in this section is a warning against these ‘heralds from hell’ and signs that should help us determine who is really from God.

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The text begins with the word ‘*beloved*’ (AGAPETOS) meaning: dearly or well loved. Now this word is used five times in this epistle (3:2;21; 4:1,7,11). In verse 3:2 we see the reason why we are called beloved: ‘*Beloved, now we are children of God*’. The love of God was bestowed upon repentant individuals and they were given to become a child of God!

So this section is no doubt addressed to born-again believers. John tells them to be very careful *do not believe every spirit*. What I find fascinating is that John first of all speaks of false spirits and then of false prophets. You can see that there is a direct link between what is called a ‘false prophet’ and ‘spirits that are not from God’. It is as though angels who have not retained their own principality and left their proper habitation somehow teach these false doctrines to those who have hearts to receive them. The apostle Paul writes often about them.

1 Timothy 4:1,2

**(1) Now the Spirit distinctly declares that in latter days there will be some who will fall away from the faith, by listening to spirits of error, and to teachings of demons (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy. These are men whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron,
(NKJV)**

Here we see that some fall away from the faith BECAUSE they listened to ‘*spirits of error and the teachings of demons*’. These warnings from Paul and John are so important because the aim of these evil spirits is to make you fall away from your faith and to make you proclaim another gospel. Paul says that it is by ‘*listening*’ to them that we can fall from faith. Just as we listen to the real gospel message and become saved when we add our faith to it, Christians can also listen to false teachings and drift away from the truth! So if we are not to believe every spirit what should we do?

(1)..., but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

We are to ‘*test the spirits*’. The word ‘*test*’ (DOKIMAZO) means: to test, discern and examine. In other words we need to be vigilant, watchful and alert concerning spiritual matters. Too many people simply and naively believe whatever a person teaches simply because they are behind a pulpit, write a book, pass on television, have a huge ministry, are on the Web or seem to be such nice people. What John says is that the world is full of these false prophets – imagine today! These false prophets are not content just to believe their own lies – NO! They ‘*have gone out into the world*’. They go about proclaiming false gospels that have their roots in these evil spirits. They are on fire and do a great job at evangelizing people. You need to be careful not to be infected by them.

²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

In verses two and three John gives us the measure that prophets and teachers need to have to be called 'men and women' of God. It is quite simple yet complex.

(2)...every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God;

He deals with the spiritual world, the invisible world that we are surrounded with and influenced by. These '*spirits*' (PNEUMA) This word has different applications: a current of air, soul, angel or demon. It is also used for life, the mind and even the Holy Spirit. It is the context that tells us what the meaning of the word is. Here the context in verses two and three is a spirit either from God or from the antichrist. The test has to do with what these spirits whisper unto others concerning Jesus Christ. Has Jesus actually come in the '*flesh*' or not? Early on there were people proclaiming that the LOGOS (the Word of God) went into a man called Jesus of Nazareth at his baptism and had left him just before his death at the cross. They thought that Jesus WAS NOT God incarnate but had received his Spirit who had greatly worked through him. These teachers would never confess (HOMOLOGEO) meaning: covenant, acknowledges or confession that Jesus was God but rather he was used by God. We need to understand that this is not the ONLY test given in the bible concerning false prophets. Here are three others.

First there is the test of prophecy. If a person says that something will happen and it does not, then he or she is a false prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

(20)'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

(21)''And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' -

(22)''when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

(NKJV)

If people would apply this today most of these so called modern, self-proclaimed teachers from God would be exposed!

Second is the test of false teachings. Some will come with teachings that are not orthodox (which means – straight). Always be very careful when someone says that he or she found a new truth, a new way or a hidden secret that was revealed to him.

2 Peter 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

(NKJV)

Third are the people who take the Word of God and twist it to their own benefit or ideas. These are people who explain the Word of God but actually do not understand the laws that govern how to understand the Bible and bring forth a correct interpretation which is a process known as exegesis.

2Peter 3:16

as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

(NKJV)

John says that these spirits are not from God but rather from the antichrist of which we have spoken in an earlier chapter. We should not be afraid of these false teachers and we should help others not to fall into their traps by showing them what the Bible standards are concerning them. Unfortunately I find that this word from Christ is so true in our society.

Matthew 15:12-14

(12)Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

(13)But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

(14)"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

(NKJV)

Many spiritual leaders are blind and unfortunately so are their disciples and what is told is that both will fall into a ditch!

⁴You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.

The good news is that some have not listened to false prophets and teachers and have become children of God. Some had hearts that properly received the seed planted when they heard the gospel. John says that the children of God have '*overcome*' (NIKAO) meaning: to conquer, prevail or victorious. Because we are of God and have his Spirit in us, because we listen to his Word and not their teachings we are victorious over these false teachers. Unfortunately this verse is used in so many situations which are simply not so. '*Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world*' has become some kind of magical 'hocus-pocus' phrase. This is not some kind of mantra that Christians should be repeating. This has to do with overcoming false teachings by the knowledge that we have of God and his Word. The more I know of God and of his Word the more I will be able to be victorious because I will not fall into the evil spirits 'traps' and doctrines of demons. So study your Bibles, go to Bible study groups or Sunday school. Take time to read and meditate on what is written. Read good and solid doctrinal or theological books.

John says that the false prophets are '*from the world*' and those who listen to these false teachers and apply their faith to their teachings are actually also from the world. They are not spiritually inclined but are earthly people who run after the flesh. May we never make the mistake of thinking that human religion does not satisfy the flesh!

⁶ We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In verse six, John is going 'full circle'. In verse five the others listen to fallen spirits using men to spread their own gospel. They receive and apply what they are taught. They are just as blind as their spiritual leaders. So this is how you can identify them, just open your eyes and you will plainly see. By contrast, verse six speaks of those who have not listened to the false teachers but rather have received the Word of God. The proof of this is that people of God listen to teachers from God. They know, they can discern spiritual right from wrong. They can distinguish a spirit of truth from a spirit of error. Can you? Are you truly able to see which person is of God? Can you determine if the doctrine taught is from the devil? Are you immune to the lies that are openly taught by a great number of contemporary preachers? We all need spiritual wisdom to separate right from wrong. Before applying your faith to a teaching, make certain that it is truly from God.

FIRST JOHN
1 John 4:7-12
16 - 'Let us love one another'

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Love is certainly one of the themes that you find recurring in this epistle. The word 'love' is actually mentioned thirteen times in our small section - that is ENORMOUS. Have you noticed that John begins with the word '*beloved*'? I see this as being very important. You see this entire section deals with loving others but how can I love others? The answer lies in having first being loved by God. Believers are beloved so having received the love of God they in turn can now truly love others.

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

This seems to be a natural conclusion of first being loved by God. We must remember that having received the Holy Spirit we are now indwelt with the holy character of God. Something has changed in the believer and no wonder for we have received a new heart (Ez. 36:26, Eph. 5:19), a new mind (Rom. 12:12) and have become new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15). What are believers now called to do? Love one another that's what! Some Christians seem to find life empty and boring. There is only one reason for that – it is because they have not yet set their minds on loving one another! When we decide to apply the Word of God and actually love one another then we don't have enough hours in one day. John also tells us that loving each other is a kind of manifested seal to our salvation.

(7)...and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

This is a very strong statement because it declares that you don't really know God if you don't manifest God's love towards others. The word '*knows*' (GINOSKO) means to be aware or understand. Spending your life on a church pew does not make you a child of God.

Going to church activities and really not loving those around you just manifests your spiritual bankruptcy. I fear that many will be surprised to find out that they are rejected by Christ believing that they are truly born again. I must be honest enough and look at my life. Am I loving others with the mind of Christ? Do I care about others and is it manifested in my life? Is loving others sporadic or is it a life pattern?

⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Many call John ‘The apostle of love’. In a way he certainly is but look at what he writes! He’s not talking about ‘puppy love’, his love has celestial standards! If John were a boxer this would be his knock-out punch! ‘If you don’t live love then you don’t know God’ – BANG right on the nose for the knock-out! A spiritual knock-out that is. There is no way out of this equation: If you don’t love then you don’t know God. One and one is two and so is John’s statement. But why is loving others so important? Simply because of the following: ‘*God is love*’. If God is in you then so should his love be. If I pour white paint in black paint does the paint remain black? No, it becomes grey, it actually does not have a choice but to become grey. The Holy Spirit in the believer is that ‘paint’ which changes our ‘color’ (mind and heart).

2 Corinthians 3:18

**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
(NKJV)**

So again I must ask, has your heart been changed and is now overflowing with the love of God unto others?

John also writes ‘*God is love*’. This phrase is wonderful but it can also lead people away from God. This is what I mean. When people just say ‘God is love’ without the context that it is written in then they can stray into all kinds of spiritual errors. If ‘God is love’ then all we need is to love one another and all will be fine. If ‘God is love’ then salvation comes through loving people. If ‘God is love’ then there is no other rule but love in life. Do you see what I mean? When I was a teenager it was the ‘hippy movement’ that was the latest fad. For the Hippies love was all that mattered. Remember the song by the Beatles ‘All you need is love?’ For them love lead to sexual promiscuity and perversion. Making love meant having sex. An entire generation of young people landed up believing that this was love – live and let live. They were wrong even though they stated this famous Bible verse ‘God is love’. Once again, Amen that God is love for if he was not love then we would all be left in our sin waiting for the judgment to come.

⁹By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

This wonderful verse should be understood by everyone who declares to be a child of God. There is so much confusion in relationship with the love of God towards his children. There are many movements that proclaim that the manifestation of God's love for you is through health, wealth, careers, material possessions, popularity and so many other desires of the flesh. They teach that if you can 'name it' then you can 'claim it'. I would suggest that all who really believe that we have a God that satisfies the desires of the flesh should read the New Testament over and over again – very slowly and prayerfully. By doing so you will notice that the blessings of God are spiritual ones. We are even told that if we love the world or the things of the world we are carnally minded and are spiritually dead, we are at enmity against God and finally we can not please God.

Romans 8:5-8

(5)For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

(6)For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

(7)Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

(8)So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

(NKJV)

John sets the record straight, the love of God is not manifested by perfect health. Timothy was a sick and fragile person (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul even says that he had frequent infirmities. Epaphroditus who was a fellow worker with Paul was so sick he almost died (Phil. 2:25-27). Trophimus, another worker in the faith was left sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). We also know that Paul also had episodes of 'thorns in the flesh' (2 Cor. 12:5-10). His eyes also seemed to have lost their capacities (Gal. 4:15). The love of God is not manifested by riches for all the apostles were poor and had little more but their clothes on their backs. The disciples who were rich were already rich before coming to faith. Now, I don't mean that we can not become wealthy but it is not a proof that God loves us. The love of God is manifested to all his children by this:

(9)...God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

God gave his Son to give us life, real life (John 1:4). He gave his Son to become a propitiation (a sacrifice) for us (1 John 2:2). He gave his Son so we can see the Light (John 9:5). He gave his Son so we can enter through him (John 10:7).

He gave his Son so we can have true peace (John 14:27). This is how God manifests his love to us not by riches, health and material possessions.

Romans 5:8

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.
(NKJV)**

This is probably one of my favorite verses and for me it says it all! Please notice that John says that *'we might live through him'*. Life is IN Jesus Christ. The world offers many things to fulfill or gratify our life but they are just lies. There is nothing that can grasp our heart like the love of God. Nothing can satisfy and give a sense of fullness more than knowing that you are forgiven and are dearly loved by God.

**¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to
be the propitiation for our sins.**

In case we didn't understand John re-phrases verse nine. This verse also teaches the chronological order of salvation. God came to mankind and it is never the opposite. God loved, God sent his Son, and the Son lived and died as a sacrifice for our sins (propitiation). John even says that *'not that we loved God'*. We lived and loved our flesh and the fruits of the flesh. We cared about ourselves and lived for ourselves. Our minds were set upon the things of this world. We knew of God but were not interested in God. You might say that I am exaggerating at least a little bit. If you think so this is what Paul wrote:

Romans 3:10-18

(10)As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;

(11)There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

(12)They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

**(13)"Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit";
"The poison of asps is under their lips";**

(14)"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

**(15)"Their feet are swift to shed blood;(16)Destruction and misery are in their
ways;(17)And the way of peace they have not known."**

(18)"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

(NKJV)

I rest my case! As John says: *'not that we loved God'*. May we bless the Lord for he has loved us first!

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John bounces back with the theme he began in verse seven – love each other. John is saying something like this: ‘How can we not love others when we have been loved so much by the Lord?’ This is conditional ‘*if God so loved us*’. I also know that it is a conclusion ‘*if God...*’ I would like to ask (speaking about the conditional form) have you been loved by God in a way that John described. Have you tasted, deep in your soul, the love of God? Have you been refreshed by his eternal waters like the Samaritan woman was (John 4)? Have you been born-again like Nicodemus was (John 3)? This is the most important question you personally need to answer. For without God’s love in you through Jesus Christ then there is no Father-child relationship only a Judge-criminal relationship. May I ask if you are living the obvious deduction of having God’s love in you – do you love others? John says: ‘*we also ought to love one another*’. The word ‘*ought*’ (OPHEILO) means: to be under obligation, to be bound. Children of God are under the obligation to love others because we have first been loved by God. It does not depend on whether we feel like it or not – we are bound to do it. It is our duty to live as God lives and love globally this describes his attitude towards others.

¹² No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Here John is speaking of both the Father and the Holy Spirit for only God the Son manifested himself in the flesh. No one can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). We can see a theophany (any direct, visual manifestation of the presence of God – such as the ‘angel of the Lord’ in the Old Testament) but never God – the Father or Holy Spirit. I believe what John is saying is that since God is invisible how can people see him? They can see him through the love of his children! We are even taught that God’s love being active through us is perfecting us. Many desire that ‘God would work in them’ and they wonder how this can be done. The answer is quite simple – let the love of God in you, pass through you unto others. Let God’s love flow through you. This is possible and actually is normal for born-again believers. Do you remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman?

John 4:13,14

(13) Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, (14)"but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

(NKJV)

The waters of life that Jesus gives will *'become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life'*. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the waters he gives overflow. Just like water springs forth from a fountain so is the life that Christ gives. Beloved have you closed the 'tap' of your spiritual waters or are they flowing out of you unto others? So let God work in you and perfect you by loving others the way God wants you to.

FIRST JOHN
17 - 'Abiding in God's love'
1 John 4:13-21

¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

(NASB)

Have you ever seen a pylon that is driven into the ground and do you know why it is so? Pylons are driven into the ground so that the foundation of the future building will rest upon them. The ground is not strong enough to safely build upon it and pylons will fix the problem. If you have seen pylons driven into the ground you know that it takes a very long time for them to be completely driven into the ground. Every time it is hit it only goes down an inch or so. You can imagine when the pylon is twenty feet down how long it takes! If you are wondering why I am speaking of pylons, slowly driving them into the ground and the future foundation that will be laid upon them – this is why. In this section John once again will speak of two of his favorite words (abiding and love). We are the pylons and he is slowly driving us into the subject of abiding and loving. Every time he speaks of these two subjects he is pounding truth in us so that God can build upon us a life that will glorify him. You might be tired of hearing John speak of abiding and loving but it is necessary that we 'really get it'.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

The word '*know*' (GINOSKO) meaning to be aware, perceive or understand is very important for John. In this epistle he uses this word fifteen times! Knowledge and the certainty of it makes all the difference in a believer's life.

Far too many Christians are never truly certain if God really loves them, or cares for them, or will forgive them. They either doubt God or figure out that what is written is for the others not for them. The Holy Spirit through the pen of John wants all children of God to be positively convinced of the truth of God's word. In verse thirteen John gives proof that God *'abides'* (MENO): to continue, dwell and remain in the believer. This proof is the following: *'He has given us of His Spirit'*. The giving of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate proof that God is 'with' and 'in' the true believer. There is a lot of confusion in the 'Christian world' concerning receiving the Holy Spirit. Let me just say a few words. First, when the Holy Spirit was given in Acts two, ALL who were there received him. Afterwards in every example of people receiving the Holy Spirit it was always ALL that did. Never do we see only 6 out of 24 believers that were there that were given the Spirit. Second, we NEVER see an example of a born-again believer who is abandoned by the Spirit. In the dispensation of grace the Holy Spirit indwells the believer until the day of final redemption (Eph. 4:30). Third, we also never see a believer receive the gift of the Holy Spirit apart from the instant he believed unto salvation (Acts 19:2). There is no such thing as being saved without the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). I also want you to notice that *'He has given us His Spirit'*. The Holy Spirit is given by God unto the new born believer. There is no magical formula to receive the Holy Spirit. It is a gift from God. Do you remember the story of Peter and Simon?

Acts 8:17-21

(17)Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

(18)And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

(19)saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

(20)But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

(21)"You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

(NKJV)

We unfortunately still see today that in certain Christian circles they teach that by doing certain things or saying certain 'mantras' you can either receive the Holy Spirit or speak in tongues (glossolalia). Here John teaches that God gives *'of His Spirit'* to ALL who are born-again. Now how can I be so certain that it is to ALL – very simple! John writes: *'He has given US'* (emphasis added). God has given US, not God has given to some or to the most deserving but to US. The word is all-inclusive absolutely no one is left out.

14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Have you noticed that John speaks of what the Father has done in favor of his elected children? In verse thirteen John speaks of the Father giving of the Holy Spirit and in verse fourteen we see that the Father now gives the Son. What an important phrase is found in verse fourteen: *'the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world'*. Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of the world. Salvation is only obtained through and ONLY through God – the Son. Salvation is not through: good deeds, church membership or affiliation, prayers, penitence, money, philosophy, abstinence of certain things, social status, ethnic background, nationality or anything else for that matter. If Jesus Christ is not truly, absolutely and solely your Savior then you are not saved. If you are not washed by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:14) then your sins are still staining your soul and you are under judgment.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Sometimes we hear someone speak of Jesus and we automatically think that he or she is a Christian – we should not. There is a difference between speaking about Jesus and what the Bible means by *'confessing'* Christ. The word *'confesses'* (HOMOLOGEO) means: to assert, a covenant or to acknowledge. When John writes *'Whoever confesses that Jesus...'*, he means that whoever has a covenant with him or solemnly declares that he is the Son of God – that person has God abiding in him and he abides in God.

Romans 10:8-10

**(8)But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"
(that is, the word of faith which we preach):**

**(9)that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that
God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

**(10)For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth
confession is made unto salvation.**

(NKJV)

The words *'confess and confession'* are both from the same Greek word as *'confess'* in 1 John 4:15. People need to make a covenant with God to be saved; to make a solemn declaration (from the heart) that Christ was crucified for your sins. Have you made this solemn declaration?

Has your heart and mind declared that Christ is the only means by which you will stand righteous before God the Father? If not – now is the time to do it. Simply close your eyes and ask Christ to save you! Repent and give your life to the Lord.

¹⁶ We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Verses sixteen to twenty one is one unit concerning love and what love does in the believer's life. This is the second time that John writes that '*God is love*' (4:8,16). Many things are said about who God is – here is a small list:

- God is a witness (Gen. 31:50)
- God is not a man (Num. 23:19)
- God is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24)
- God is merciful (Deut. 4:31)
- God is a jealous God (Deut. 6:15)
- God is God of gods (Deut. 10:17)
- God is your refuge (Deut. 33:27)
- God is graceful and merciful (2 Chron. 30:9)
- God is wise (Job 9:3)

Nowhere but in 1 John is it written that 'God is love' and it is mentioned twice! It is so wonderful to understand that God is love (John 3:16). That we can rest in his tender love and care (Mat. 11:28).

¹⁷ By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

A believer can never become perfect but the love of God in the believer can be set at work to transform him into a better reflection of the beloved Son. Why does God work in the believer through his love for him? In verse seventeen we see it is so that we will have greater '*confidence*' (PARRHESIA) meaning: assurance and boldness. His love transforms the believer so that he will cease to be afraid concerning the Day of Judgment. All has been taken care of at the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus is both perfect and eternal.

Hebrews 10:14-18

(14)For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

(15)But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

(16)"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"

(17)then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

(18)Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

(NKJV)

May these words re-assure the believer, he is safe and sound on the Day of Judgment for Christ has been judged in his place. God sees his beloved children like he sees his own Son because we are hidden in Him (Phil. 3:9-11).

¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

Why do we fear God? Mostly because we do not understand him and his love for us. As long as we fear God we will believe that there is a punishment waiting for us either in this life or in eternity. We know that God disciplines his child but it is always out of love and for his concern. So when we fear God (that he will punish us) it is a sign that we have not yet been perfected in his Love. A child of God should walk out of the love he has for his celestial Father rather than out of fear.

¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

So why do we love God – *'because He first loved us'*. You see it is God that first reached out for us. We were dead in our trespasses (Eph. 2:1;5, Col. 2:13) and God made us alive in his beloved Son (1 Peter 3:18).

²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

John has spoken about what true godly love in the believer does in him. Here he returns to a favourite theme 'loving others'. If I say I love God and do not love my brother then I am a liar. If the love of God is in me then it should pour unto others around me. I recently saw a video concerning a preacher who was teaching about 'loving others', he was in First John.

Suddenly we hear a cell phone that rings for someone had forgotten to turn it off during the Bible lesson. The pastor stops teaching, and asks whose phone just rang. A young man lifts his hand, the pastor comes next to him, asks for the phone and once it was given to him he actually throws it on the ground and breaks it! He then just returns to the pulpit and continues by coming back to his text and saying 'Let us therefore love one another'! I just could not believe what I had seen. This preacher certainly did not love his brother by breaking his cell phone and humiliating him in front of everybody. This preacher taught about love but did not actually know what it was. So do we also say we 'love God' if so is it manifested by loving others? For how can we love God whom we never saw if we can't love people that we do see?

²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

John reminds his readers that loving others is not a choice on the believer's part but it is actually a '*commandment*' (ENTOLE) meaning: an injunction, precept. We have no choice BUT if the love of God is in us then it is not a burden to do so. A Christian can not force someone to accept his love or to react kindly towards his love. We are simply told to love others. The results are not in our hands. May we become better lovers of those around us.

FIRST JOHN
18 - 'Love, faith and victory'
1 John 5:1-5

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
(NASB)

In this last chapter of First John we see that another favorite theme is once more brought to the surface – being born again. It is said that John 3:16 is the Bible verse that is the most well-known and cited. It does not surprise me that it was written by John. Over and over again he speaks of the importance of this spiritual birth. For without it, we would still be in our sins. In John's famous third chapter of his gospel this is what he reports Jesus saying to Nicodemus concerning being born-again.

John 3:3

**Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
(NKJV)**

John 3:5

**Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.
(NKJV)**

John 3:6-8

(6)"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

(7)"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

**(8)"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
(NKJV)**

So Jesus says that we cannot see the kingdom of God (v.3), that we cannot enter the kingdom of God (v.4) and that we absolutely need to be born-again (v.7). Amen that Christ died for our sins so we can have true life (John 20:31).

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

As we have said earlier, *faith* is the foundation of our spiritual life. The word '*believes*' (PISTEUO) means: to have faith in, to entrust. "Faith alone in Christ" was the battle cry of the Reformation. When faith regained its proper place it operated miracles and millions of souls came to salvation in European revival which gave birth to the Reformation. Still today you need this faith that shouts without any hesitation that Jesus is the Christ (which is the Greek word for Messiah). Many say that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, as I did. But I was not saved from my sins. My belief was not true faith but more of an acceptance of Jesus as an historical figure. Only when my faith became 'personal', only when Jesus became MY Savior was I born again. May I ask what type of faith YOU have? A historical faith in a man called Jesus – yes he actually did live in Israel over 2000 years ago. Or a personal faith that Jesus took upon himself your sins and paid the price of your condemnation so you could be delivered from the wrath of God. John echoes once more the theme of love as he writes:

(1)...and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.

This speaks about the love for the brethren (brothers and sisters) that the true believer should have. Since we are born of the Spirit we automatically love God. But this spiritual love is pointed not only towards the Father but also to all of his children. We love the brethren BECAUSE they are '*born of Him*' (GENNAO) meaning: bear, begat, procreate. Since they are of Him and created by Him the believer's love should rest upon them. This actually reveals how much you love the Father! It is an open test for all to see. The more you love the brethren the greater is your love for the Father! The less I see you love the brethren, the less you love the Father. That is spiritual reality. That is where the rubber meets the road. So how's your love for the brethren in the church?

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

This is a very particular verse, please read it again. I always believed (and it is so) that I manifest my love for the Father by keeping his word. But this verse says that one way of manifesting that I love the brethren is by loving God and keeping his commandments. Now how does this work?

How can I love the brethren by loving God and doing what he asks of me? After pondering for a little while we understand what John means. By keeping God's Word it automatically has a positive effect on others and manifests that I truly care for them. Let's just look at some of the Ten Commandments in Exodus twenty.

- Honor your father and mother
- You shall not murder
- You shall not commit adultery
- You shall not steal
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
- You shall not covet your neighbor's....

Commandments five to ten all reflect a proper way of relating with others. So when I keep the commandments I automatically love my neighbor. So the more I love the Father and respect his Word the more I will love the brethren (and non-believers) around me. The opposite is also true, the less I care about the commandments of God the less I will manifest love towards others.

³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

I can not get away with loving God and not caring about his commandments. How can I say I love my spouse or children or family members and at the same time do the opposite of what they ask or believe in? How can I say 'I love you' and then lie to them, or speak against them, or disrespect them? If this is so between human beings how much more between man and God? So once again John says that loving God is manifested by keeping his will. Now does this make a person a legalist (believing that works makes us righteous)? Absolutely not, because the very foundation of our relationship with God is based on FAITH in Christ Jesus. Keeping his commandments is a manifestation of our appreciation, attachment and love of God because of what he has done in our favor. It is NOT to gain his approval. Listen to what James said:

James 2:15-18

- (15)If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,**
(16)and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?
(17)Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
(18)But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

(NKJV)

Faith without works is DEAD but faith with works is perfecting the believer (1 John 4:17). The opposite is also true. Works without faith has absolutely no worth. This is what Jesus had to say concerning this:

Matthew 7:21-23

(21)"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

(22)"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

(23)"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

Even great works such as; prophesying, casting out demons and doing many wonders in the name of Jesus have NO WORTH if there is no faith (I never knew you) as the foundation of their actions. We only practice lawlessness! John says that God's commandments are not *'burdensome'* (BARUS) meaning: weighty, grave or heavy. Do you remember when Jesus spoke against the Scribes and the Pharisees because of their teachings?

Matthew 23:4

"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

(NKJV)

They were placing all sorts of laws (especially their own and traditions of the Elders) on the shoulders of the Jewish people and did nothing to help them. With God this is different. The Holy Spirit was given so he could become our Helper (John 15:26; 16:7). Jesus invites us to come to him because (Mat. 11:30) *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* And finally the Lord God is our Helper (Heb. 13:6). So God the Father, Son and Spirit all work together to lighten our being yoked with Him. That is why John says that his commandments are not burdensome.

⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Being born-again has many wonderful benefits: forgiveness, hope, an inheritance, peace with God and so forth. Here John describes another benefit flowing out of it. We know that we are in a spiritual war, that we have an enemy (Mat. 13:39; 1 Peter 5:8). His desire is to bring shame and defeat in our life. It is also to keep people as far away as possible from the truth (Gen. 3:1-6). John says that when a person is born-again he is now able to '*overcome*' (NIKAO) meaning: to subdue, conquer and prevail. We can triumph in life. We no longer have to live in darkness and bear the fruits of the flesh. We now have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as our aid.

We are told that '*and this is the victory*'. The word '*victory*' (NIKE): the figurative meaning is: the means of success. So we are told that we can overcome, we can have victory but how is this attained? John says that the means to have victory passes through '*our faith*'. It passes through our assurance, belief or deep persuasion. It is our personal trust in the Lord God and his Word that will give victory to the born-again believer. We need to have the faith of a little child not only to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18:17) but also to have victory in life.

⁵ Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Overcoming the world you say! Can I overcome whatever is placed against me? Can I have victory in my spiritual life? Can I become the person that God wants me to be? Can I actually become more Christ-like? The answer is a big YES! And once more John gives the simple recipe: '*he who believes*'. Here is the part of faith again. Who are the ones who can overcome – those who have faith that Jesus is truly the Son of God! So have you laid down your arms at the feet of Jesus? Have you surrendered your life to him? Has he cleansed you from your sins? Is he your ONLY righteousness on which you stand to be saved? If your answer is yes, then that faith will give you victory. It's yours for the taking (and mostly) for the glory of God.

FIRST JOHN
19 - 'He who came'
1 John 5:6-12

⁶ This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify:⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰ The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

(NASB)

Verses six through eight are difficult to explain. Sometimes I wish I was in the writers head and knew exactly what he meant! There are different explanations for these three verses and it can get pretty complicated. I will write what I have confidence in but you will have to research for yourself, study, pray and come to a conclusion that you believe is true. By the way the Bible is not always easy to comprehend. No one can say that he knows the exact meaning and interpretation of every verse in the Scriptures. But I bless God that the 'salvation story' is easy enough for anyone to understand.

⁶ This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

The subject is *'the One'*, this of course is Jesus Christ (John says so himself). John now states that Jesus *'came by water and blood'*. If we keep in mind that he earlier spoke of Gnostics (1 John 4:2,3) and he also spoke of them in 2 John 1:7 we can have a better idea of what these three verses mean. The Gnostics of the first century taught that the flesh was evil and that the spirit was good. So nothing that came out of (or through) the flesh could ever be of any value. Quite the contrary the flesh was to be bridled, restrained and contained. If this is so then Jesus was not actually made of flesh but was rather a phantom, a spirit that took on the form of a man. The Bible tells us otherwise! Jesus was born of a woman – and was a true man.

Galatians 4:4,5

- (4)But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
(5)to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
(NKJV)**

John knows that if Jesus was only a spirit and had no flesh then the entire gospel story is thrown out the window. The reason is simple:

Ephesians 2:12-16

- (12)that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
(13)But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
(14)For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,
(15)having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,
(16)and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.
(NKJV)**

Jesus ‘abolished in His flesh the enmity’ (v.15) that is the hostility or the war if you prefer. In other words Jesus made peace(for us) with the Father through his sacrifice. (Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Eph. 2:14, Col. 1:20). Think of it, if there is no flesh then there can be no real sacrifice and no real salvation. So John highly stresses this point because of the false teachers that were spreading their false gospel. He writes that they have the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). ‘*Water and blood*’ may simply mean that Christ was born through the waters of birth as all humans do and the blood speaks of his shed blood at the cross. He is proving that Jesus was not a ghost or spirit but a true person in every sense.

(6)...It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

This may refer to the Holy Spirit testifying that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the Son of God when he was baptized (Mark 1:10,11).

⁷ For there are three that testify:⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

Have you ever wondered why John makes a point to speak concerning the three (Spirit, water and blood) witnesses in Jesus' case? Why does he not only use the Holy Spirit? It may be because in the Old Testament the Lord God spoke of having two or three witnesses to establish the truth concerning something.

Deut. 19:15

**"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.
(NKJV)**

So the matter is established because there are three witnesses that speak of Jesus being a true human being like you and I are. John also speaks of the testimony of God – the Father. But when did God testify in favor of his Son? First of all when Jesus was baptized the Father spoke in his favour.

Mat. 3:17

**And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
(NKJV)**

The second time the Father testified for his Son was at his transfiguration.

Mat. 17:5

**While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"
(NKJV)**

John writes that *'the testimony of God is greater'* than the testimony of men. Beloved I must once more refresh your memory concerning the worth of the Word of God. In simple terms 'you can bet your life on it!' That's what Jesus did! He truly believed that he was going to die yet be resurrected from the dead - and he did!. He believed every single word that came from his Father's mouth.

Luke 4:4

**But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"
(NKJV)**

In every aspect of life the testimony of God is greater than anything else. Even when everyone tells you it would be foolish to do or to say – if the Bible says that you should then God’s testimony is greater. They say: “you don’t have to help that person. He was so mean to you let him suffer!” God’s testimony is: Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

¹⁰ The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

As we have said before, faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. John writes that when we truly believe we have faith *‘in the Son of God’*. Here we first see the object of our faith - Jesus Christ. It is not a religion or a philosophy, it is Jesus. It is not a church nor a set of rules, it is Jesus. It is not a religious leader, a prophet or spiritual guide, it is Jesus. It is not a spiritual movement, a denomination nor a set of creeds, it is Jesus. Long ago I have determined that the only one I will follow is Jesus. It is repeated 19 times in the gospels the following words of Jesus: ‘follow me’. Now when we believe something happens – there is a testimony from God who lives in us. This testimony is two-fold. One is in written form and the other in living form. As for the written form this is what Jesus said:

John 5:39

**"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.
(NKJV)**

So our first testimony is the Written Word – the Holy Scriptures. They will nourish and feed our soul. They will testify concerning not only Christ but all that refers to our spiritual life and relationship with the Lord God. Our second testimony - is the Holy Spirit himself.

John 15:26

**"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.
(NKJV)**

The grace of God is upon those who believe that Jesus is the Christ for he gives them an inward testimony – the Holy Spirit and an outward testimony – the Scriptures. So what happens to the one who does not believe in the testimony of God? He is made to be a liar before the Lord!

(10)...the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

I personally would not want to be acknowledged as a *'liar'* before God because the Scriptures says that all liars will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). This verse tells me that all who object, neglect, reject the testimony of God are doomed to hell UNLESS they repent and receive salvation in Jesus Christ. There is no middle ground with God! You are either a sheep or a goat (Mat. 25:32-46).

¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

So what is this testimony that when accepted will grant you God's favor and when it is rejected will bring judgment? The testimony had to do with the gift of *'eternal life'*. I write gift simply because it is written that *'God has given us'* (John 4:10, Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:15-18; 6:23; Eph. 2:8). Please notice that John writes *'has given us'*. It is in the past tense, it is done! Believers have received it. We do not have to hope for it, but rather thank God we have received it! Believers have received eternal life, we have been forgiven and have become children of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

'Life is in His Son'. How foolish we can be to try to find true life outside of the Son. The world is bombarding us with pleasures of the flesh which are supposed to give us a 'happy or fulfilled life'. But we know deep down inside that all these things never really do satisfy the soul. Listen to what Paul writes about finding true life in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 3:7-9

(7)But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

(8)Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

**(9)and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;
(NKJV)**

All things he counted worthy is now a loss (v.7,8) and all these things he now sees them as rubbish (v.8). Life is in Jesus Christ – he is the living waters (John 4:10) and the bread of life (John 6:35). Have you come to him to receive true life? Are you not tired of working for something that never satisfies? His door is always open. Come through him (Rev. 3:20).

¹²He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

It could not be simpler! If you have the Son then you have life (eternal). If you don't have the Son then you don't have life (eternal). John wrote another verse that is almost exactly like this one. It is found in his gospel.

John 3:36

**"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
(NKJV)**

All that you really have when you don't have the Son is the wrath of God resting upon you! So where do you stand?

FIRST JOHN
20 - 'Seven last encouragements'
1 John 5:13-21

¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.

¹⁸ We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.
(NASB)

We have come to our last section, a conclusion of some sort. Conclusions are always important. They focus our attention on what is to be remembered. With the Word of God ALL is worthy of great attention but it seems that John places a special emphasis on what he will write. I can see SEVEN different subjects that he highlights. Some he has already written about but others are new. So let's take a look.

¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

When he writes '*These things I have written to you*' he naturally speaks of his entire letter that he has just penned. I can see that John doesn't write just to fill up space but he has a goal. This should be a good example for us - doing things for a purpose and counting our days.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
(NKJV)

John's first final encouragement speaks of faith and salvation. John wrote to *'you who believe in the name of the Son of God'* – fellow Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is what he wants them to be certain of and is one of the main points of his letter, *'that you may know that you have eternal life'*. As we have seen before, knowledge is so very important. All we do is through knowledge and without knowledge we are just a body of living flesh not able to do anything. I remember my step-father who when he was an older man, was struck with senility and after a while he could not do anything nor remember anyone. He just sat and stared into the void. John wants us to know, to be certain of this main thing. If you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ then you have eternal life (1 John 2:25; 5:11). There are many who are not certain of their salvation and because of this they fret all their life. But, glory to God, we can be assured not because of anything that we can do but rather because of what Christ has done for us.

Titus 3:4-6

**(4)But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
 (5)not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy
 He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
 (6)whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
 (NKJV)**

John's second final encouragement is about our prayer life.

¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

It's important to have confidence (PARRHESIA) meaning: assurance or boldness. It's wonderful not to be afraid to move forward or to begin a new venture. John wants the children of God not to be afraid in their prayer life, but to simply come forward and talk to their spiritual Father. Verse fourteen is so important to understand and there is a reason why it is written before verse fifteen.

(14)...., if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Here we have a very important spiritual principle: when we pray it must be according to His will. The word *'will'* means: desire, choice or decree. Children of God can't ask for just anything and think that the Lord God hears us. We need to pray according to His desires and decrees. I can not pray to sin or to satisfy my flesh. I can not pray for my own glory. James warns us concerning praying the wrong way:

James 4:2-4

(2) You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

(3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

(4) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

(NKJV)

James says that one of the reasons why our prayers are not answered is because we pray to satisfy our flesh (*spend it on your pleasures*). So when we do pray, let's remember to first make certain that our prayer is pleasing to the Lord and coincides with his will.

¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Verse fifteen is often stated without verse fourteen. Unfortunately people do this deliberately. How good this sounds:

- God hears us in whatever we ask (so you can ask anything and everything)
- We know we have the request which we have asked (God will give it to us, it is a promise)

If there is no verse fourteen then we can all join the 'name it and claim it' movement. BUT verse fourteen is there and we simply can not erase it from our Bibles. We will assuredly receive what we pray for WHEN it is according to the will of God (V.14). It's comforting to know that God hears our prayers. But it is also very encouraging that God does not listen to our foolish requests and petitions. Imagine the greater mess this world would be in if God did everything we asked him to do! Amen that God is Sovereign in all things.

John's third final encouragement deals with a difficult subject – the sin that leads to death

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.

This section is divided in two: those who commit a sin that does not lead unto death and those who do sin that leads unto death. The subject is praying for a '*brother*'.

Which gives the idea that the two groups of people can be assumed to both be in the faith. When a brother sins and it does not lead unto death, this gives the idea that someone sins and the consequence of that type of sin will not bring the punishment of death unto him. Is there an example of this to be found? Yes, in First Corinthians when Paul speaks concerning the Lord's Table. Paul says that the brethren should look to their hearts and judge themselves before taking of the bread and cup. If we are not honest and do not judge ourselves – there is a judgment upon us.

1 Corinthians 11:28-32

(28)But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

(29)For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

(30)For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

(31)For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

(32)But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

(NKJV)

Paul says that many are sick and also many sleep, meaning that they have died. We all know that the church of Corinth was filled with sin and spiritual troubles. Some did not bother to repent and change their ways and because of this a grave judgment fell upon them. Can we find other examples where sinning led to physical death? Yes there are other ones. Paul deals with the Christian who was having sex with one of his father's concubines.

1 Corinthians 5:4,5

(4)In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(5)deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

(NKJV)

He was to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (he would die). Then there is the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander who blasphemed against God. They also were turned over to Satan.

1 Timothy 1:19,20

(19)having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

(20)of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

(NKJV)

Let's not forget the case of Ananias and Sapphira they were also instantly put to death because they had lied to the Holy Spirit concerning their monetary offering (Acts 5:1-10)

From what can be understood Christians should have wisdom and discernment to see if the sin of the person is leading that person to be chastised by God (put to death). If this is not the case then we should pray for that person so he can repent and be once more in fellowship with the Lord. But if it is a sin that leads unto death (God's personal punishment) then we are not to pray because it is obviously against the will of God. The difficult thing is how to know if it is one or the other? It may be that in the early church the Holy Spirit made it much more evident for all to know.

¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.

John reminds his readers that unrighteousness is sin but that is not the type of sin that leads to death. It's reassuring for us to know because we all sin every day. These daily sins are not the ones John is referring to in verse sixteen.

The fourth final encouragement deals with continuing in sin.

¹⁸ We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

WE have spoken about this. We know that John is not saying that a believer NEVER sins because in 1 John 1:8-10 he says that we all do sin and if we don't believe it then we are just deceiving ourselves. What is taught here is that the true believer will not continue living in sin. He will not live for it nor feel no remorse about it. The born-again believers do not persist in sin because they are born of God. Who is the one that keeps the believer safe and sound? I believe it is the Holy Spirit that is spoken of here. One of the wonderful things about this verse is the following: '*and the evil one does not touch him*'. Some believe that a true child of God can be possessed by an evil spirit but what we actually see is the opposite – *the evil one does not touch him*. Why? Because he has He (the Holy Spirit) that keeps him safe. So we are protected by God against the evil one. This does not give the believer a 'free pass' to sin – never – as Paul writes:

Romans 6:1,2

(1)What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

(2)Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

(NKJV)

The fifth final encouragement deals with spiritual reality.

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of the evil one*.

There are two spiritual realities that are described here in verse nineteen. The first is that believers can affirm that they are children of God - not that they might be but that they are! This is not being pretentious because it is NEVER based on our own merits but solely on the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is very reassuring to understand that our judgment has been placed on the shoulders of Christ; that he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Knowing this we should be grateful and ever glorify the Lord for his immense grace that was bestowed upon the believer.

The second spiritual reality is that '*the world lies in the power of the evil one*'. Does this mean that he is all powerful – absolutely not! He is a created being and has limits set upon him by God who created him. What this means is that the world is under his influence, that his system of rebellion is to be seen everywhere on earth. There is not a single inch of earth that has not been soiled by the sin of the evil one. All governing institutions, all banks, all armies, all countries and their leadership, and everything else for the matter are under the 'influence'. Remember what Satan told Jesus while he was in the desert?

Luke 4:5,6

(5) Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

(6) And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

(NKJV)

The sixth final encouragement deals with understanding who Jesus is.

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

We know that we are in the Son. Actually Paul teaches the believers that they even have become part of his spiritual body (1 Cor. 12:27). We also know that Christ is the truth (John 14:6). Actually it is the Holy Spirit that testifies to us that Jesus is the Christ. But what is most outstanding concerning verse twenty is what is written next:

(20)...This is the true God and eternal life.

This is clearly one of the best verses that upholds the deity of Jesus. No doubt about it. *'This is the true God and eternal life'*. Truly Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last (Rev. 1:8;11). Have you bowed down before the Lord of lords and the King of Kings? Have you repented of your sins and declared yourself unworthy of his forgiveness? Have you given your life to be at His service? Jesus is the true God and eternal life!

The seventh final encouragement deals with our wayward heart.

²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

If there is one thing that we need to protect - it is our heart. How easily it can be swept away and fall once more into disgrace. Idols can be everywhere and take any shape or form. They can even look very spiritual but they are traps and snares that lead you away from the true God and eternal life. We are called to follow Christ and live from his waters.

Matthew 16:24-26

- (24)Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**
- (25)"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**
- (26)"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**
- (NKJV)**