

THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

Verse By Verse Bible Studies

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TO KNOW AND KNOW YOU KNOW

A Study Guide
To
The Epistles of John

Volume I

By

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DEDICATION

To

Carolyn Sanders

&

Susan Sanders

Thanks you for those nieces and nephews!

FOREWORD

In this study of one of my favorite books in the Bible, I am going to do something I have never done in any other study. I have prepared verse by verse studies (some 30 volumes) on various books of the Bible. Some I have developed into commentaries, others need a lot of work. For that reason, I think of these studies simply as my Bible notebook, or THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK. Some 24 or 25 volumes may be found in the PastorLife.Com website, as well as about 150 sermon manuscripts (THE SERMON NOTEBOOK). PastorLife.Com is the creation of Dr. Mike Minnix of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Dr. Minnix has made a commitment to make available to pastors and teachers a vast library of resources free of charge. In this study, for the first time, I have blended THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK and selections from THE SERMON NOTEBOOK. Some changes have been made to selections from THE SERMON NOTEBOOK in order to condense, to some extent.

For years, I preached from the KJV after studying various translations, primarily the NASB. At this time I am using the Holman Christian Standard Bible as my primary study Bible. I had the privilege of voting on the translation and publication of this Bible. It is not a “version” but a new translation. As Dr. Ed Bloom, General Editor, explained to members of the Broadman and Holman Committee in one of my first meetings of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resource, the HCSB is a word for word translation, carefully edited so that it is easy to understand.

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR. In this study it is assumed that the author was John, brother of James, son of Zebedee, the same apostle who wrote the Gospel According to John and the Revelation. At the time these epistles were written John was well advanced in years, having outlived all the other apostles and Paul by many years. He is affectionately known now as the Elder John or John the Evangelist.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING: The epistles were probably written around A.D. 85 - 95. John reportedly spent the last years of his life at Ephesus, except for the exile on Patmos. He was probably at Ephesus when he wrote the epistles.

PURPOSE AND OCCASION: The epistles were written to deal with specific difficulties that threatened the church. A.T. Robertson said that they were written for the edification of readers in the truth and the life in Christ. “Yet,” he says, “the errors of the Gnostics were constantly before John’s mind. John warns believers about false teachers. The false teachers against whom he wrote were antimonian Gnostics, Gnosticism grew out of Greek philosophy and by the time John wrote these letters many Christians had been confused by the heresy” [A. T. Robertson, WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, The Bible Navigator Electronic Bible Library, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, TN, a creation of Tim Vineyard, VP over the technology division. As a trustee I had the privilege of voting to establish this department and name Tim Vineyard to his post]. The Gnostics got their name from the Greek word “*gnosis*” which means knowledge. To them the key to salvation was knowledge. Primary tenets of their faith are listed below:

- 1) They separated the Father from the Son.
- 2) They denied the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- 3) They held a dualistic view of the world.
- 4) They insisted that salvation came from knowledge – learning a certain set of theories about the creation and about Jesus.
- 5) They also insisted that sin was powerless over their lives, and to prove it they boasted of their indulgence in immoral acts.

In 1 John, the author gives the Christian a series of **nine tests for knowing the truth** – each time

using the verb “to know” (*gnosis*):

- 1) 2:3 - “This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands.”
- 2) 2:5 - “But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected.”
- 3) 3:16 - “This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.”
- 4) 3:18-20 - “Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth; **that is how we will know we are of the truth**, and will convince our hearts in His presence, 20 because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.”
- 5) 3:24 - “The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.”
- 6) 4:2 - “This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”
- 7) 4:6 - “We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.”
- 8) 4:13 - “This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit.”
- 9) 5:2 - “This is how we know that we love God’s children when we love God and obey His commands.”

Practically every thought in 1 John is found in the Gospel. Compare the prologue to the Gospel with the first four verses of this Epistle. The First Epistle is a letter which may have been addressed to any New Testament church but was not. Some have referred to it as a “to whom it may concern” letter.

POINT TO REMEMBER: The purpose given for the Gospel of John is found in John 20:30-31: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so **that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.** The purpose in 1 John is given in 2:3: “By this **we know that we have come to know Him**, if we keep His commandments.” The Lord wants you to know Him and He wants you to know that you know Him.

CHAPTER ONE

The Prologue to the First Epistle of John

1 John 1:1 - 4

While it is not particularly easy to outline the First Epistle of John, three important themes are woven together throughout this the longest of John's three epistles. **Those three themes** are: (1) light vs. darkness, (2) love vs. hatred, (3) and truth vs. error. Warren Wiersbe writes:

These three "strands" weave in and out of the letter, making it difficult to construct a simple outline. The above outline is based on the main lessons of each section, although the careful student will see that the three themes intermingle. In these days when many Christians think they have fellowship with God but do not, and when many religious people think they are true sons of God but are not, it is important that we apply these tests and examine our own lives carefully [Quick-Verse Bible Library].

Wiersbe's outline of this epistle will help us to focus on the main themes:

- Introduction: The reality of Jesus Christ (1:1-4)
- I. The Tests of Fellowship: God is Light (1:5-2:29)
 - A. The test of obedience (1:5-2:6)
 - B. The test of love (2:7-17)
 - C. The test of truth (2:18-29)
- II. The Tests of Sonship: God Is Love (3-5)
 - A. The test of obedience (3:1-24)
 - B. The test of love (4:1-21)
 - C. The test of truth (5:1-21)

PROLOGUE, 1:1-4

1:1 - WORD OF LIFE: *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the*

Word of life-” (1 John 1:1, HCSB). In Prologue, verses 1-4, John states the purpose of the First Epistle of John. The purpose in the Gospel According the John is clearly stated:

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31, HCSB).

The purpose of this the First Epistle of John is also clearly stated: “so that our joy may be complete.” Where there is assurance of salvation there is joy; where there is no assurance there is no abiding joy.

WORD. “The term ‘Word’ when used in relation to God, is borrowed from human speech. It indicates that when a man utters words he has formed a purpose and chosen to reveal it. In like manner God’s word means that He has chosen to reveal His purpose” [Ray Frank Robbins, lecture notes]. The term “Word” (*logos*) means reason or thought and its utterance. “Word of Life” is employed by John to portray God’s manifestation of Himself—His character, purpose, love purity, His salvation through Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son.

1:2 - WE TESTIFY. *“That life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us”* (1 John 1:2). Luke tells us that he carefully research everything he wrote concerning the events in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Almost a generation later, John affirms the testimony the Holy Spirit had inspired the Gospel writers to record. He said, “We have seen it” and “we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.” John saw the signs, but he is speaking here of the Word, the eternal Christ, of which he wrote in the Gospel According to John.

1:3 - WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD. *“What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* The inspired account of the Gospel we read in the Gospel of John and in this epistle is not myth or fiction. John has given an eyewitness account of what he had seen and heard. A. T. Robertson noted that:

Three senses are here appealed to (hearing, sight, touch) as combining to show the reality of Christ's humanity against the Docetic Gnostics and the qualification of John by experience to speak. But he is also “the Word of life” and so God Incarnate. [ATR—Word Pictures in the New Testament].

FELLOWSHIP. The Word became flesh to create a new fellowship. Fellowship here suggests the body of Christ. Those who are saved are born into a new fellowship – they belong to Jesus and to one another. This fellowship is a special life which one can possess only through sharing in the life of Jesus Christ. Fellowship, in this context, is not a matter of pizza and Cokes in the fellowship hall on Saturday evening. The NT word stresses a participation in worship and ministry.

1:4 - WE ARE WRITING. “We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” Thus, the goal of this epistle is stated up front – “That our joy may be complete.”

Now that we have mentioned the dominant themes of this epistles, I am going to do something that might seem a little strange - instead of following or developing sermons along those lines, I am going to focus on an overriding theme which leaps from the page each time I read this epistle. Regardless of the title or the specific subject of each message, the overriding theme of every message in this series from 1 John is the assurance of our salvation. The basic themes will be touched on as we go through the book, but the focus will be on (1) **Knowing Him**, (2) **Knowing that You Know Him**, and (3) **the joy of knowing Him**. In light of the budding Gnostic heresy that was invading the church, this assurance was important to the early church. In these Post-modern times when alien philosophies are invading the church at a disturbing rate, we need to glean what we can from 1 John. I might add that true assurance is based on sound doctrine, something that is sadly lacking in this age of “easy believism”, in a time of moral and philosophical relativism when the only thing many people would condemn is the one who would condemn anything (“They are too judgmental!”). People go to church to be entertained, not to repent; content to leave feeling good, not forgiven. Now we are hearing things like: “It’s all about worship, not evangelism; what God wants is worship, not missions.” What do you suppose they do with the Great Commission?

John is going to state that our assurance is not based on how “I feel in my heart.” I was listening to Adrian Rogers a few years ago on the radio in my car when he did what he did so often; he expressed a deep thought or concept in the simplest manner. Speaking on salvation, he stressed that salvation is not a feeling. He said, emotions are the weakest part of the individual. Why would God do His greatest work in the weakest part of me?” My assurance is based on the sure and certain work of Jesus Christ, and on the sure and certain Word of God.

Believe me, the message of 1 John is as relevant - and as urgent - for us today as it was for those first readers in the churches of Asia Minor. Our approach in this series will be that of interpretation, illustration, and application. The message is not useless if it is not applicable. Open your Bible and get ready for an unprecedented blessing!

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK - 1 John 1:1-2

I. JOHN TESTIFIES TO THE VERACITY OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, 1:1-2.

A. No Living Person Was So Well Qualified to Give Such a Testimony.

- 1) John was the “beloved disciple” who sat nearest the Lord at the Last Supper.
- 2) He had outlived all the other Apostles.

- 3) His apostolic authority was accepted in the churches of Asia Minor.
- 4) He had been inspired to write the Fourth Gospel.
- 5) He had been in the Upper Room at Pentecost.
- 6) He had disciplined many of the leaders of the church at he wrote this epistle.
- 7) He is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Letter Was Written to Dispel the Gnostic Heresy.

- (a) The philosophical Gnostics claimed superior knowledge.
They taught that matter was evil and spirit was good.
They denied the humanity of Jesus Christ.
- (b) Docetic Gnostics claimed that Jesus only appeared to be human.
- (c) Corinthian Gnostics taught that the spirit descended upon Jesus at Baptism and departed before His death (Spirit could not die).
- (d) This Greek philosophy was invading the church.
- (e) The Prologue to the Gospel of John confronts Gnostic claims about Jesus.

C. John Had Intimate Knowledge of Jesus and the Gospel, 1:1a.

1) "That which was from the beginning" denotes the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A similar phrase in the Gospel of John denotes the Second Person of the Trinity Who was with the Father from the beginning of eternity. "That which was from the beginning" is not masculine but neuter, thus the Gospel. John had intimate knowledge of the Gospel from the beginning of the preaching of the Good News. However, there is no way John can separate the Gospel from Jesus Christ.

2) Gnostics claimed special knowledge, John a Superior Knowledge. No living person was so well qualified to speak on either the humanity of Jesus Christ as the church's elder statesman and spokesman, the last apostle. He spoke with apostolic authority and now he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His testimony would answer Gnosticism, confront those who were teaching this heresy in the church, and equip the church to deal with the heresy in the future. It was going to get a lot worse before it got any better.

3) The phrase, "from the beginning," stresses two things. First, John had had intimate knowledge of the Gospel from the very beginning, having been one of the inner circle of apostles. He was the Lord's beloved disciple. Had he maintained the same spirit of pride and egotism that earned him and his brother James the title, "sons of thunder," he might have stressed just how well he had known the Lord, but he is a far different John now. In his humility he seems to want to hide self rather than insert his name in The Gospel which bears his name or in this epistle.

Second, the phrase, "from the beginning" seems to imply a consistency and a stability which should be associated with the Gospel. Just as God is immutable, so is the Gospel changeless. Now after more than nineteen hundred years we are preaching the same Gospel. Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb.

13:8), and the Gospel is the same.

D. Jesus Was Human, Just as the Gospel Proclaims, 1:1b.

- 1) Jesus was as human as if He had not been divine.
- 2) He was as divine as if He had not been human.
- 3) This cannot be said of anyone else who has ever lived.
- 4) One cannot be saved without knowing the truth.

Jesus is the truth, the greatest testimony to God's eternal truth. We cannot preach the truth without proclaiming both the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ.

E. John Defends the Humanity of Jesus, 1:b,c).

- 1) "Which we have heard" stresses that Jesus was really Human.
- 2) "Which we have seen with our eyes" demands a physical body.
- 3) "Which we have looked upon" shows that He was no apparition.
- 4) "Our hands have handled" nails the door on Gnosticism.
- 5) "Concerning the Word of life" points to the Author and Subject of the Gospel.

F. John Bears Witness to Jesus Christ, 1:2.

- 1) The Gospel of life "was manifested" by God. No man dreamed up the Gospel, no man "founded" the church, and no one invented the Savior. Furthermore, no one could have discovered, or through some superior knowledge comprehended Jesus Christ. No one today can "find" God. No one chooses God. He finds and chooses us. We must believe in Him but he supplies the faith.
- 2) John was one of the witnesses to the Gospel. "We" stresses that all the early disciples were witnesses to Jesus and to the eternal life He manifested from the Father. The word witness is from the Greek word for martyr. When I was very young in the ministry Mavis Allen, editor of the Outreach Magazine, a Southern Baptist Sunday School (now LifeWay Christian Resources) asked me to write an article on witnessing. I wrote on Acts 1:8, and while Dr. H. Leo Eddleman was writing his commentary on the Book of Acts I discovered that I had made a mistake. I wrote that Jesus, in Acts 1:8, was restating the Great Commission. Dr. Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Seminary when I was a student, had become a close friend over the years. In fact, his father had served as pastor of my home church. J. Edgar Hoover once said that Dr. Leo Eddleman had the best working knowledge of Hebrew of any non-Jew in America. Though identified with Hebrew studies, he has majored in Greek in formal studies. He explained to me that Acts 1:8 is predictive: what Jesus was doing was predicting that His disciples would carry out the Great Commission after they were empowered by the Holy Spirit.

To be a witness was to lay his or her life on the line for the sake of the Gospel. All the other apostles, according to tradition, had already been martyred for the cause of Christ. John will risk all in order to bear a witness to Jesus Christ. He would be exiled to the Island of Patmos for the sake of the Gospel. There he would be inspired to write (or record) the Revelation. Wouldn't it be interesting to know if the witness he is bearing in this epistle would become a factor in his being exiled to remove him from his office in Ephesus?

II. JOHN REVEALS THE PURPOSE OF THIS EPISTLE, 1:3-4.

A. The First Purpose Is Fellowship, 1:3.

- 1) The Gospel opens the door to fellowship with other believers, 3a.
- 2) The Gospel opens the door to fellowship with the father, 3b.

It is absolutely essential that we understand that the word for fellowship here has nothing to do with Cokes and cookies before Sunday School, or Pepsis and Pizzas after church on Sunday night. The Greek words denotes "a participation in": a participation in the Gospel, a participation in the work of the Kingdom of God. We are partners in worship, partners in evangelism, partners in ministry, and yes, even partners in martyrdom.

B. The Epistle Was Written That "Your Joy May Be Full," 1:4.

In my commentary on Philipians, *UNDEFEATED! Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble* (p. 24), I wrote: There is

No joy without peace
No peace without Grace
No Grace without Jesus

CONCLUSION. Jesus was fully human and He was fully divine. Not only did He live, he was seen and heard and touched. Jesus manifested the love of the Father and proclaimed the good new of eternal life through faith in Him. The Gospel answered the Gnostics of the first and second centuries, and it answers all heresies today. If you would have eternal life, you must know Jesus. And the amazing thing is that you do not have to discover Him through some mystic knowledge. Jesus reveals the Father, just as the Holy Spirit works within human hearts to enable us to believe and accept His great salvation.

I. GOD IS LIGHT, 1:5-6.

1:5 - GOD IS LIGHT. *"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."* He is absolute light – the source of light, the creator of light, the provider of light. It is the property of light to shine, and it is the nature of God to reveal Himself to His creation. It is His nature to imparts Himself to those whom He has created in His image. The greatest expression of His Self-revelation came when the eternal Word became flesh (John 1:1-14).

For years, we have been reading about near-death experiences. These testimonies have been examined and discussed for years. Some want to believe everything like this they hear. Others are not open to anything that they cannot explain or verify with the normal senses. In many of those

near-death testimonies, the individual is traveling through a tunnel and when they come out of it they see a blinding light.

Bear in mind that Jesus is the Light of the World and that Satan disguises Himself as an angel of light, mimicking Jesus. With that in mind, what is implied by the blinding light at the end of the tunnel? I recently drove through three different tunnels and I can assure you that without any lights in the tunnels they would have been very dark and I am sure any light at the end of the tunnel would have seemed very bright.

If, as one approaches the end of a tunnel the light is extremely bright, we are justified in assuming that the tunnel is dark. Now, here is the point of all of this: In your daily walk, or in any near death experience, the true Christians is never in a dark tunnel. David wrote, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me" (Ps. 23). I am not walking in a dark tunnel, but in the valley of the shadow of death, and I am not alone. My Good Shepherd is with me. Because the Light of the World is my constant companion as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear - nor anticipate - an angel of light at the end of a tunnel. God is light here and now, and throughout all eternity, Jesus will be the light of heaven. He illumines the way for His saints today.

1:6 - FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* In 1 John, there are nine which help us to know that we know Him. There are also some very strong statements about light and darkness. If you are in God, who is light, you cannot walk in darkness. If you are walking in darkness (habitually) you do not have fellowship with the God is the Light of the world.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 1:5-6

INTRODUCTION. The first three Gospel accounts were inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Person, birth, life, and teachings of Jesus Christ, Luke specifically to give us an accurate historical account of all He did and taught - that is, all he was inspired to write. The fourth Gospel was "written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). The First Epistle of John was written to help us "know that we know Him" (1 John 2:3a). Coming to know Jesus as Savior is not a feeling - Salvation will initiate feelings but feelings will never generate salvation.

While the First Epistle of John was written to equip the church for its war against a specific heresy of that day (and thus, for similar heresies of our day), it was also written to provide believers with assurance of their salvation. God wants you to know that you know Him! Bob Moore, one of our deacons at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Nederland, Texas, was also the director of a very large youth department. He asked a lady named Kay to give her testimony to the young people one Sunday morning. When she finished he came to my study and told me about it, asking if he could bring her to my study to share her testimony. If Kay were here today I would ask her to share her remarkable story about how God delivered her from the slavery of religion to the freedom of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

To give you a thumbnail account, when Kay and her husband moved to Nederland, she was warned that she was moving in next to "the biggest bunch of Baptists in Nederland." She was on guard from the moment the neighbor came across to ask if there was anything she could do to help her with her move. For two years she was consistently aware of her neighbors, even though they did not come over and try to "convert her." She looked for any sign of hypocrisy but her neighbors seemed genuine in their faith. Then their teenage daughter began to date. Kay, determined to prove to herself that these people were hypocrites, decided to watch Billie - young people face a lot of temptations, and since she had never seen anything in the life of her parents, Bill and Joyce that would prove them to be hypocrites, she focused on the daughter's life.

After watching Billie for several months, this devout Catholic went into her kitchen and fell down on her knees and prayed, "Lord, these people have something I don't have, and I want what they have." She was saved because of the living witness of her neighbors, Billie in particular. Now, let's "fast forward." Billie is our organist and a Sunday School teacher. One Sunday, Billie walks by me and pauses to tell me that she has been having some doubts about her salvation: "I don't have time to talk this morning, but I would like to talk with you about this next Sunday." I assured her that I would be available. "However," I added, "I would like for you to spend a lot of time in First John this week." The next Sunday, a radiant Sunday School teacher/organist walked by me with a big smile, "Everything is fine," she said. There is no one who is so mature or spiritual that he or she does not need the message of the epistle, the divine Author of which is the Holy Spirit. Now, look with me at 1 John 1:5-6.

I. GOD IS LIGHT, 1:5.

A. This Is the Message the Apostles Received from Jesus Himself.

- 1) This Is the Message He Proclaimed.
- 2) This Is the Message the Holy Spirit Is now Proclaiming through John.

B. Light Here Is a Metaphor for God.

- 1) No one can define God.
- 2) Various metaphors, attributes, and titles help us to know Him more intimately.
- 3) No theme or metaphor used so often in the Bible is insignificant.

C. Light Is a Very Special Metaphor for God.

- 1) There are many qualities and attributes of light.
- 2) There are seven basic colors.

There are three primary colors, red, blue, and yellow, and from these colors, all other colors are made. The three secondary colors, orange, purple, and green join with the primary colors to complete the rainbow. The completeness of the rainbow illustrates the completeness of God.

The colors of the rainbow reflect various amounts of light. We also have black and white as well as tints and shades. A tint is any hue with white added to it. A shade is any hue with black added to it. White reflects light. Black absorbs light but does not reflect it. Perhaps it is in these specific qualities that the metaphors are most appropriate. Light reveals, darkness conceals.

For the lost person, finding meaning in this metaphor would be a little like a blind man searching a dark room for a black cat - that is not there in the first place. He may expend a lot of energy but he is going to find nothing. The reason we are able to see God (with spiritual eyes), to perceive Him, and to comprehend Him is that He is constantly revealing Himself to us to enable us to know Him - and to know that we know Him.

3) The full spectrum speaks of a God Who is complete and absolute.

D. There Are Three Qualities of Light That Make the Metaphor More Significant.

1) There is activity - it is seen and felt.

2) There is luminescence - it is seen.

3) There is warmth - it is felt.

E. Our Salvation Is the Work of God, Who is One in Essence, Three in Personality.

1) The Father planned it.

2) The Son executed it.

3) The Holy Spirit revealed it with power.

II. PROOF OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS IN THE WAY WE WALK, 1:6.

A. True Believers May Have Fellowship With God.

1) The Christian has the privilege of fellowship with the Lord.

2) One may claim fellowship without having it.

3) Every moment you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, or the old sin nature.

4) Here, "If we" introduces the first of five conditional clauses in this section.

There are four class conditions in the Greek New Testament:

- (1) The first class condition - assumed to be true (if that is a tree - and it is).
- (2) The second class condition - assumed not to be true (if I were a tree - but I am not).
- (3) The third class condition - it may be true or it may not (If you stay on your diet you will lose weight - you may, or you may not).
- (4) The fourth class condition - I wish it were, but it is not - as in 1 Peter 3:17.

The third class condition used here means one may claim fellowship with God, or he may not. Fellowship with God is available to every believer, but many who claim fellowship with Him are lying to themselves and to others. The Scripture here reveals how each person may know whether or not he or she is in fellowship with God. This is critical - you need to know; you had better know!

Remember that no lost person has fellowship with God. A person who is in fellowship with God is a Christian who, if filled with the Holy Spirit, a person who is walking in the Spirit, or walking in the light (vs. 7). A person who out of fellowship with God is either a lost person, or a believer who is dominated by his old sinful nature; that is, he is walking in darkness. His life reflects many of the same patterns and habits found in lost people. He is carnal, grieving the Holy Spirit by sin, quenching the Holy Spirit through the works of the flesh (even good works). He is walking in darkness, even as he claims to be in fellowship with God. You cannot walk in darkness and walk in the light at the same time.

B. Many Do Not Practice the Truth.

- 1) Lost people cannot practice the truth because they do not know the Truth.
- 2) Carnal believers are not practicing the truth.
- 3) Morality is not Christianity.

You do not get to be a Christian by being moral; you are empowered to live a moral life when you receive Jesus Christ. One, who is walking according the flesh, or his old sin nature, may be very hard to distinguish from a lost person - or, he may be very hard to distinguish from a believer who is walking in the light. One can obey the rules, abstain from vices, go to church every Sunday, and still be either lost, or a believer who is not in fellowship with the Lord.

Morality is the byproduct of Christianity, Christianity is never the byproduct of morality, nor is Christianity ever to be equated with morality. God is very clear about this.

- 4) A pseudo-spirituality professes fellowship with God but does not practice the truth.

This may take on many forms. Some confuse means and results. Good works are the fruit of our salvation, not the root. Good works do not fill us with the Holy Spirit; being filled with the Holy Spirit produces good works. Pseudo-spirituality may impersonate personalities or certain traits seen in others, from dress, to speech, to facial expressions, and even religious clichés. Pseudo-spirituality leads one to compare

his life with others, rather than Christ. He observes others when he should be going to the Word of God. He or she may be deceiving himself with outward expressions of religion, ranging anywhere from simple rituals to asceticism, fasting, abstinence from alcohol or make-up.

5) Many who claim fellowship with God today may be lying.

I am convinced today that many people are coming to church to be entertained. They want the pastor to entertain them, they want the choir to entertain them, and they want the musicians to entertain them. What they don't want to come on their face in repentance before God. We are seeing a lot of what has been called easy believism on the part of people who come to church with one thought in mind: they want to leave feeling good about themselves.

There are two groups of people who are guilty of lying to God and others. First, there are those who are living in open sin. The young woman who boasts of her immorality to her friend one moment and the next moment she announces to another, "I'll be praying for you." There are those who go to a service on Sunday morning once or twice a month, but they can hardly wait to get to the restaurant to do the family thing, and then take off to the lake or the golf course. Sunday is not a holy day, it is a holiday.

The second group to practice this pseudo-spirituality is made up of people who are always in church, but they do not want to be confronted with sin. I would divide this group. First there are those who seem bored with it all. They are usually in services, but there is not much in their attitude that would attract lost people to Jesus Christ. Then there are those who seem to think that proof of their spirituality is their willingness to set everyone else straight.

The next group is made up of what my sister Linda calls the HHPP - that is, Happy Happy Praise People. They love to sing, wave hands, dance, and sway, some of them wearing a down right giddy expression. But don't say anything negative. Condemn sin and you are judgmental, and being judgmental is worse than the sin of witchcraft, immorality, or violence.

Someone recently announced to a large congregation, that Christianity is not about missions, it is about praise. In deep theological terms, that's stupid! Has that person read the Great Commission lately? Why should any Christian drive a wedge between worship and missions or evangelism.

Worship and praise are scriptural, but the Gospel is often confrontational, and today, whether they want to hear it or not, we must emphasize missions, and personal evangelism. We must demand repentance of sin and a separated life. We must encourage people to speak to God through praise, but warn them of the danger of not listening when God is speaking to them. However, your salvation is far too important for it to be left to one's feelings. God wants you to know Him, and He wants you to know that you know Him (1 John 2:3).

CONCLUSION. The third class condition in this verse implies a choice that must be made. You may claim fellowship with God, or you may not. You may actually have

fellowship with God, or you may not. If you are in fellowship with Him, rejoice in it and ask Him to strengthen your fellowship by filling you with His Spirit.

II. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, 1 JOHN 7-10

1:7 - IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT. *“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.”* Observe that the Scripture says, “If we walk in the Light.” This is the condition of the third class. This is important if we want to understand that the Lord is saying to us. The condition of the first class a statement is assumed to be true. In the condition of the second class it is assumed to be false. In the condition of third class, it may either be true or false. It is conditioned on one’s response or action.

The Gnostics claimed to have fellowship with God but insisted that it made no moral demands on their lives. The Scripture states that it is impossible for one to continue in sin (darkness) and have fellowship with Him Who is the Light. Anyone who claims to know God and have fellowship with Him, but continues to live in sin is living a deceived, deluded existence.

WALK. The word suggests the total expression of one’s life in this world—the way he lives. The Gnostics isolated God from the arena of human struggle and attributed salvation to knowledge rather than Jesus. What are some of the ways we isolate God from life today?

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 1:7

INTRODUCTION. God wants lost people to know him (John 20:30-31). He also wants those who know Him to know that they know him. God wants Christians to know they are saved, and He wants lost people to know they are lost. He saves lost people, and at the point of salvation, God gives us His Holy Spirit - we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, or baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit immediately begins the process of sanctifying us. Sanctification is a process by which God conforms us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

First John 1:7 teaches that those who walk in the light have two very special blessings: (1) they have fellowship with God, and (2) they are being cleansed daily.

I. CHRISTIANS SHOULD AND MAY WALK IN THE LIGHT.

A. You Either Walk in the Light or in Darkness.

This is the **second of five times** in this brief passage that John uses **the condition of the third class**. The condition of the third class means that it may be true or it may be false - you may do it or you may not. Just as Justification is not forced on anyone against his will, Sanctification is not coerced. God wants you to live a spiritual life. You may, or you may not.

If you are walking in the light you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, but if you are walking in the dark you are walking in the power of Satan and the old sin nature. You do not live in a spiritual vacuum; you are either walking in the light or you are walking in darkness. You are either spiritual or carnal. Sadly, far too many Christians think of people only in terms of their being saved or lost. We must never confuse Justification and Sanctification. In **Justification** we are pronounced just, and in **Sanctification** we are grown, nurtured, and developed. Justification is a mighty act of God. Sanctification denotes the mighty, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Make no mistake about it, Sanctification is supernatural. You can no more sanctify yourself than you can save yourself.

You ought to walk in the light (walk in the spirit). You may or you may not do it, but you should. You cannot sanctify yourself and it does not happen by accident. If you humble yourself before God and let the Holy Spirit fill your heart He will work a mighty work in your life. When this is happening you will have assurance of salvation. If this is not happening, you are either lost, or you are a backslider who needs to confess your sin, repent, and ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. How may you know if you are spiritual? This passage will help provide some answers.

1) We need to understand the principle of being spiritual.

- a. We must walk by faith, 2 Cor. 5:7.
- b. We must walk in the truth, 3 John, vs. 4.
- c. We must walk in the light (spirit), 1 John 1:7.

2) This is the doctrine of spirituality.

- a. God supplies the power and the incentives.
- b. We are responsible for the commitment to walk in the spirit.

This is in **the active voice - we must keep on walking in the light**. It is in the **subjunctive mood - maybe you will and maybe you won't**. An act of the will is required in Sanctification. Remember, in Sanctification there is assurance of salvation.

It is absolutely essential that we understand God's part and our part. You cannot sanctify yourself. Only God can do that and He is not going to do that against your will. In fact, He is not going to do that without your doing your part. While He does all the sanctifying, our part is vital. Nothing happens against our will. If you are not spiritual, if you are not walking in the spirit (walking in the light), then there is no one to blame but yourself. Priesthood of believers is not only a privilege, it is also an awesome responsibility.

B. Now Let Us Look at the Work of the Holy Spirit and the Believer.

1) Look at the work of the Holy Spirit before and after salvation.

- a. He convicts the lost of sin, judgment, and righteousness, John 16:8ff.
- b. He is the Agent of salvation.

- c. He baptizes us into Christ.
- d. He seals us in Christ.
- e. He guides in truth (sound doctrine), John 16:13.
- f. He glorifies Christ, not Himself, John 16:14.
- g. He gives spiritual gifts
- h. If you grieve the Holy Spirit He will still indwell you, but fellowship suffers.

2) We must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is expressed in various ways. Sadly, some people disassociate themselves from other believers over terminology, when they may be using different words that speak of the same thing. Unfortunately, when it comes to religious matters, people often throw more heat on the subject than light, and that includes Christians. We do not choose Christ, He chooses us; yet Paul writes, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit empowers us and nurtures us, but we must be make a commitment to walk in the light.

3) A spiritual believer will do certain things;

- a. A spiritual believer imitates Christ.
- b. A spiritual believer glorifies Christ.

4) A spiritual believer is not under the law, Gal. 5:18, 23.

5) One who is filled with the Holy Spirit cannot keep on sinning, 1 John 3:9-10. He will commit acts of sin, and if we deny that we do not know the truth (1 John 1:8). Romans 3:23 is very clear: "For all have sinned (past tense), and come short (present tense) of the glory of God." However, one who has been indwelt and is being filled daily with the Spirit of God cannot continue in sin in such a way as to make it a lifestyle.

C. Two Non-meritorious Words Describe The Believer's Part.

- 1) We must believe to be saved.
- 2) We must confess Christ daily.

D. Those Who Walk in the Light Are Blessed Two Ways.

1) They have fellowship with one another. Fellowship does not mean a "church social." Nor, does it denote all the chattering that goes on while people are supposed to be getting ready to worship the Lord before most services. One elderly deacon walked down to the front and asked the organist to lower the volume so they hear each other talk! The New Testament word rendered fellowship actually mean a participation in something, thus, a partnership in ministry, worship, and service.

2) They are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you were cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God. Since you have become a Christian, you have been cleansed from sin (committed daily, Rom. 3:23b) continually by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is in the present tense. When we confess our sin (1 John 1:9), we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

II. NOW, CONSIDER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CLEANSED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

A. Many Have a Limited Understanding of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

- 1) Jesus shed every drop of His blood.
- 2) Not one drop of His physical blood has ever touched you.
- 3) His blood may have splattered on some who were never redeemed.
- 4) His physical blood represents something important.
- 5) There is power in the blood of Christ.
- 6) Learn this well and your you will understand your salvation better.

B. There Are Many References to the Blood in the Bible.

- 1) "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood," Eph. 1:7.
- 2) Jesus Christ...washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. 1:5.

C. The Blood of Christ Is Always Associated With Salvation.

- 1) In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices portray the Cross.
 - a. Scripture is to be interpreted literally unless it is obviously figurative.
 - b. However some literal things are to be interpreted symbolically.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1 Corinthians 10:1b-4 (NASB), Paul writes, "Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for **they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**"

- 2) Jesus shed physical blood, but the blood in the Bible denotes the deeper things the blood represents.
- 3) Jesus did not bleed to death.
 - a. He was dead when the soldier checked on Him.
 - b. He had yielded up His spirit.
 - c. No one took His life, He laid it down on Himself.
 - d. His physical death does not fully explain His death for our sins.
 - e. Yet, He did die for our sins.
 - f. There was a death that preceded His physical death.
 - g. His physical blood has never touched us, but His blood cleanses us from sin.
- 4) The blood of Christ is the most powerful thing in the world.

- a. We are not saved by His physical blood, but one drop of what it represents is powerful enough to save every person in the world.
- b. No one can be saved apart from the shed blood of the Lamb of God.
- c. The blood of Christ refers to the spiritual death which the real blood represents.

CONCLUSION. On the Cross, Jesus took our sins upon Himself. The agony of the Cross is seen in the exclamation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" During those three hours of darkness, the Father turned His back on His Son because He could not look on sin. When He said, "It is finished," He literally meant that He had completed His mission. After that, He yielded up His spirit.

While on the Cross, Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves. The only way any lost person can be saved is to have his sins washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. And the only way any Christian can be cleansed of sin is through the blood of Christ, as this verse plainly reveals.

If you are a Christian you should walk in the Light. You may, or you may not. But if you do walk in the light you will have fellowship with God and with other believers. Furthermore, the blood that washed away your sins when you were saved will cleanse you when you confess your sins today, (1 John 1:9).

NOTE: In 1:8-10 we see that it is impossible to exhibit continually a life of darkness and have fellowship with Him who is Light.

1:8 - IF WE SAY - *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."* "That is, we have no personal guilt, no principle of sin" [ATR]. This is exactly what some of the Gnostics apparently were saying. They held that, since matter was evil "and the soul was not contaminated by the sinful flesh, a thin delusion with which so-called Christian scientists delude themselves today" [ATR].

1:9 - IF WE CONFESS - *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Here we have the denial of any act of sin; in verse 8 we have the principle of sin. This is **the third class condition** - we may confess or we may not confess. If we genuinely confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive the sins we confess and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To confess here means to say the same thing, or to name the same thing, or "to say the same thing as another, and, therefore, to admit the truth of an accusation" [Vincent's Word Studies in the NT, *The Bible Navigator*].

True confession means that name the sins of which you know you are guilty and that you "say the same thing" about those sins that God says about them, you see them as God sees them. If

you do that, He will cleans you of all sins. You will never have to wonder if there is something out there you do not know about that He will hold against you.

In verse 8, we have “sin”, whereas in verse 9 we have “sins.” There are no errors in the Bible and no wasted words. Noting the plural, as compared with the singular, sin, in the previous verse, Vincent writes:

The plural indicates that the confession is to be specific as well as general. Augustine's words are exactly to the point, but his play upon pardon and confess cannot be reproduced in English. "*Vis ut ille ignoscat? Tu agnosce.*" Do you wish Him to forgive? Do you confess? [Vincent's Word Studies in the NT].

HE IS FAITHFUL. We often speak of the various attributes of God: God is love; God is holy; God is omnipotent; God is omnipresent. There would be very little comfort in any of these if we did not know that He is faithful.

RIGHTEOUS. Or, just. God is both faithful and just.

The two words, faithful and righteous, imply each other. They unite in a true conception of God's character. God, who is absolute rightness, must be faithful to His own nature, and His righteous dealing with men who partake of that nature and walk in fellowship with Him, is simply fidelity to Himself. "Righteousness is truth passing into action" (Westcott) [Vincent's Word Studies in the NT].

1:10 - IF WE SAY. "*If we say, 'We have not sinned,' we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*" If a person should make that statement, as absurd as it is, we make God a liar.

This is a denial of any specific acts of sin, while in verse 1Jn 1:8 we have the denial of the principle of sin. David Smith observes that the claim to personal perfectionism has two causes, one the stifling of conscience in making God a liar (pseustên, the word used of the devil by Jesus in John 8:44), and the other ignorance of God's word, which is not in us, else we should not make such a claim—
Word Pictures in the New Testament

The Sermon Notebook - 1:8-10

INTRODUCTION. In the Fourth Gospel, John was inspired to record both the glorious teachings and numerous miraculous signs and wonders in order to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that they might believe and have eternal life through Him (John 20:30-31). First John was written to refute the budding Gnostic heresy which Gentile converts were bringing into the church. Overlaying this purpose is the theme of assurance of salvation. God wants lost people to know Him,

and He wants those who are saved to know that they know Him (1 John 2:3). The answer to Gnosticism and the answer to New Age religious philosophies (post-modernism) is sound doctrine. We need a good understanding of sin and its consequences, of God's grace, and of the difference between walking in the spirit and walking in the flesh. We are either walking in the light (walking in the Holy Spirit) or we are walking in the darkness of the old sin nature (the indwelling principle of sin). Paul wrote, "All have sinned (past tense) and come short (present tense) of the glory of God" (Rom. 2:23). We were once lost in sin. Today, even though we have been redeemed, we continue to fall short of the glory of God. We commit acts of sin because of the indwelling principle of sin (the old sin nature).

In **Justification** we were delivered from the eternal penalty of sin through the finished work of Christ. In **Sanctification** we are being delivered from the power of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. In **Glorification** we will be delivered from the presence of sin by our heavenly Father. Right now, today, the Holy Spirit works in a mighty way in the hearts and lives of believers to guide them in forming sound doctrine, and to empower them to live victoriously and witness faithfully for Jesus Christ.

The three verses we are looking at today will help us develop sound doctrine (truth), even as they teach us what to do about sin in the life of the believer.

I. ALL BELIEVERS ARE GUILTY OF SIN, 1:8.

A. Some believers may deny that they have sinned.

1) That is exactly what the some of John's first readers were saying. This is a condition of the third class, which means that we may say this, or we may not say it. Some Christians may deny that they ever commit acts of sin, or that they have an indwelling principle of sin, or an old sin nature. There are people who insist upon sinless perfection. They believe that if you commit one sin you lose your salvation and must be saved all over again.

As a prosecutor, my son John has extensive experience with youthful offenders. He never comments on individual or specifics, only in general terms (because of privacy issues). He surprised me recently when he commented on people who have been active in a church, but suddenly drop out and get into a lot of trouble. He said, "I believe that some of these people believe that once they slip up they lose their salvation, so they say, 'what's the use?', and they just go wild." I had not thought of that connection before, but he makes a lot of sense. While one person may deny sin, there are others who think of their sins as "something stupid," or "issues." Still others may have lived in fear of losing their salvation if they sin and when they realize they have committed a specific sin, they feel that if they cannot "live up to it" they might as well "live it up."

We need to be careful in reading First John, because a careless reading might lead some to think John contradicts himself. In the first place this epistle is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, not the mind of the apostle. In the second place we must distinguish between the teachings concerning acts of sin and a sinful lifestyle - that is, sinning habitually without repenting.

Many of those who were coming into the church toward the end of the First Century were Gentiles whose world view had been influenced by the budding Gnosticism of the day. Many of those converts were born-again Christians who only sought to walk in the light. They wanted to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). They wanted to know the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

Others were not genuine converts and many of those would eventually leave the church, but while a part of the church they were having a very negative impact on the fellowship. They were a like a cancerous growth infecting the body of Christ, teaching a false doctrine that led some to flaunt their sin. What some of these people taught was that there was a total separation between the body and the spirit. Spirit is good and matter is evil. When the spirit is saved, they taught, nothing the body does can affect it. Therefore, they could sin all they wanted to and it would have no effect on the spirit. Others seemed to have been teaching that once they were saved the sin principle - the old sin nature - was no longer operating in their lives.

2) Some today may make a similar claim. Does that mean that we have Gnostics in our church today? We do not have members who are wearing the label, but let me assure you that we have millions today who have been influenced by moral relativism, thanks to the influence of a century of Humanism and New Age religious beliefs. Moral relativism is a basic tenant of Humanism and New Age (Postmodernism today) religious movements. Humanism is a godless, evolutionary atheistic world-view. The New Age religious movements (plural because they have been many and varied) injected Humanism with a spiritual dimension and before the church knew what was happening they were impacting the moral climate of America, including the church.

Moral relativism is alive and well in America, and it is impacting the church today. How so? There are churches today that have ordained homosexuals, recognized same-sex marriages, and hired homosexuals to serve in various positions within the church. There are churches today that will not permit the pastor to preach against beverage alcohol. There are other churches whose members would be shocked at the thought of ordaining a homosexual, who will not tolerate a pastor who preaches against social drinking, gambling, or questionable entertainment. If you want to get into trouble in a church today, just try to get some of the teenage girls to dress modestly when they go on a church trip. If anything is said, their mothers will go on the attack - and sick their spineless husbands on the pastor! Why call them spineless if they are willing to attack the pastor? First, because they attack in packs. Second, because they are afraid of their wives. Third, they had rather risk placing their daughter in a position that is, shall we say pregnant with temptation, than to admit that they might be tempted by another young lady who wants to dress "sexy".

Fifty years ago there were some Holiness groups that claimed they "lived above sin." That is, they never committed individual acts of sin because they had put to death the old sin nature. They denied that the principle of sin was operating in their lives. Today, we are more likely to hear one argument or another that would indicate that many have rationalized sin out of their minds. They are the ones who will readily admit that they have "done something stupid," but prefer not to think of it in terms of sin, other than to agree that everyone sins. After all, they say, no one is perfect.

James Dobson's Focus on the Family is reporting that a lot of their counseling today is with church leaders who are addicted to pornography, and to a variety of sins associated with it. This is shocking. I wonder if some people who have been Christians a long time have not decided that they are beyond certain sins, and consequently they open their minds and hearts to the influence of Satan. After all, they might reason, how could I as a mature Christian be affected by looking at porn on the Internet as long as I do not act it out? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

B. If We Say We Have No Sin We Deceive Ourselves.

1) This is the third class condition. If we say we have no sin - we may say it and we may not - but if we do say it we are deceiving ourselves. God has given us His Word and His Spirit to establish us in sound doctrine. The Ryrie Study Bible Notes state that this is "A reference to the indwelling principle of sin rather than to acts of sin" [RSB]. However, it would seem more accurate to say that because of the indwelling principle of sin we do commit acts of sin. The old sin nature will be with us until we are delivered from the very presence of sin - until we are glorified.

2) If we say we have no sin "we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." If we deny the sin principle, or if we claim sinless perfection, we are deceiving ourselves mentally. A relationship with Jesus Christ involves the intellect (mind), the emotions (feelings), and the volition (will). It is sad when one over-emphasizes one and de-emphasizes another. Christianity is not a mindless religion. Some seem interested only in feelings, others in the intellectual aspects of Christianity. In reality, we must know that God wants to do, we must have a desire to do it, and we must be willing to do it.

3) There is an answer to this deception.

- a. We must take in sound doctrine to avoid deception.
- b. In Salvation we take in the Person of Christ.

We are saved by grace, through faith, plus nothing, as Paul clearly teaches in Ephesians 2:8-9 and Galatians 2:16. **We are saved by the finished work of Christ, not by finishing the work of Christ.**

- c. In Sanctification we take in the mind of Christ as the basis for spiritual growth.
- d. This passage will help us to avoid deception (vv. 6-10).

II. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, GOD WILL FORGIVE US, 1:9.

A. Confession of Sin Is an Essential Part of Christianity.

Confession is a combination of two Greek words, *homo*, meaning "same," and *lego*, meaning "to say." Thus, to confess is to say the same thing about sin that God says about it. Sin that is denied is never forgiven. Sin that is generalized is not confessed. It is one thing to pray, "Lord, forgive us for whatever sins we may have committed this past week." It is quite another to pray, "Dear Lord, I am guilty of hypocrisy. I let someone think I am more faithful to you than I know I am. I mentioned some things I do for your church and they were impressed. I do not do half

of what I should be doing. Lord, I hate hypocrisy in anyone else and it certainly no less despicable when I find it in my own heart. I know this dishonors You. I confess this sin to you and beg your forgiveness. I also need your help in resisting that temptation in the future." We may need to confess greed, lust, sins of speech, or another sin.

- (1) Lost people must confess sin, and repent, trusting Jesus for salvation.
- (2) Christians need to confess their sins to God daily.
- (3) The third class condition means that they may or they may not.
- (4) Those who confess their sins receive forgiveness.
- (5) Our heavenly Father will deal with those who do not confess their sins.

B. You Can Be Sure God Will Forgive You When You Confess Your Sins to Him.

1) God is faithful. The more we study and meditate on the attributes of God, the better we understand Him, and the better we understand Him the greater our gratitude will be for all His blessings. God is love, God is holy, God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. We could go on and on with a list of His attributes. But if He were not faithful to His Word, His character, and His nature we could not trust Him to forgive us.

2) He is just. My brother Mike once made an observation that I have reflected on many times. Mike is a highly regarded attorney in Monroe, LA, a specialist in injury litigation on the defense side. Once at lunch several years back, Mike observed that it is amazing how many people there are who have the attitude that if they have a problem, "I just want is my day in court." They think that every one who gets his day in court will receive justice. That is the ideal, but that is not always the reality. A lot of things can go wrong, including drawing a judge who has made up his mind before the trial begins. We pray for justice in this world, and I believe that our judicial system is the greatest in the world. But there are miscarriages of justice.

I can think of nothing that inspires greater confidence in God or my position in Him than the fact that He is faithful and just in all things. Always and forever, He is faithful and just.

3) He forgives the sins we confess. We must see our sins as sins against God, confess them and seek His forgiveness.

4) He also cleanses us from all unrighteousness. This is important. How do I know that all my sins are forgiven? For that matter, how do I know that I have confessed all my sins? What about that time a few days ago when for just a moment I experienced what might have been covetousness - or was I just tempted? Was I guilty of lust, or did I resist the temptation in time? Was I really jealous of my friend, or was I just tempted? What if I had an opportunity to witness for the Lord and missed it, was that sin? There is good news! If you confess the sins you know you are guilty of, God will forgive those sins - and He will cleanse you of all unrighteousness. You have His word on it.

III. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE HIM A LIAR, 1:10.

A. Some May Claim They Have Not Sinned.

This is the third class condition. Someone may actually make that claim. In fact, there have been churches that insisted that one could live above sin. I think it might have been the great evangelist, Billy Sunday, who said, "The only way you can live above sin is to rent a room above a barroom."

B. If We Claim We Have Not Sinned We Are Calling God a Liar.

God has said that all have sinned (in the past), and that all continue to fall short of the glory of God, which is sin. In spite of what God says, there might still be someone who says he or she does not sin - ever. It is bad enough to call another person a liar, but it is really a serious matter to call God a liar.

C. If We Claim We Have Not Sinned His Word Is Not In Us.

No one who is grounded in the Word of God would make such a claim, yet some who deny that they ever sin also profess a special insight in to the Word of God. The surest sign that one does not understand the Word of God is his claim that he never sins. We are not talking about lost people who cannot be expected to know the Word of God, but people who profess to be Christians.

CONCLUSION. There is no forgiveness when there is no confession of sin. To be forgiven we need to confess our sins and seek forgiveness and restoration. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*

CHAPTER TWO

I. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD MAKES US STRIVE TO AVOID ALL SIN, 2:1-2.

2:1 - THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."*

When the Lord called the late Greek and New Testament scholar, A. T. Robertson, to preach and teach His Word, only He could have known how many generations of believers would be blessed through the brilliance and dedication of this one man. It has been said that someday someone will pick up the Bible and read it and believe it and it will turn the world upside down. Well, if anyone has ever come closer to being that man than A. T. Robertson I would like to know who it is. I was introduced to Robertson's work in 1955 by Professor E. L. Douglas in the class, *The Life of Christ*. We used his *Harmony of the Gospels* as our text. For over seventy-five years,

preachers have been using his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* in preparing sermons and various Bible classes. I have written around 30 volumes of verse by verse Bible studies and I have quoted him often through the years. In commenting on this verse Dr. Robertson wrote, “John has no patience with professional perfectionists (1Jn 1:8-10), but he has still less with loose-livers like some of the Gnostics who went to all sorts of excesses without shame” [ATR, Word Pictures].

This is good preventive theology. It is also a primary purpose in the epistle. As such, it should be a goal for every believer.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN. This is a term of endearment. The Elder John thought of the believers in the area as his spiritual children, or his children in the ministry. John’s urgent plea was that they sin not - not one sin. This is God’s desire for every believer, yet He knew that all men will sin (Rom. 3:23), so He provided an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Former New Testament and Greek professor Malcom Talbert taught, “The gospel is always grace and demand (or demand and grace). Without demand, grace would be cheap sentimentality. Without grace, demand would be an intolerable burden that would drive us to despair” (class notes).

THAT YOU SIN NOT. This is in the Aorist tense, denoting snap-shot action. This verse recognizes the fact that a believer will commit an individual act of sin, but he will not keep on sinning so as to make the sin his lifestyle.

ADVOCATE. This is from *parakletos* (paraclete, the word for Comforter, the Holy Spirit, in John 14:16, 26). The word means “one who is called to stand along side.” Jesus is the Advocate Who represents us before the Father. However, this metaphor should not be pushed so far as to give a distorted picture of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Remember that when Jesus died on the cross, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,” (2 Cor. 5:19).

2:2 - HE HIMSELF. “*He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.*” This carries the force of “He Himself,” He alone, as in the HCSB. Vincent points out that the word is used only here and in John 4:10 in the New Testament.

PROPITIATION. Jesus is the propitiation (some prefer expiation) for our sins. Expiation refers to what God does to deal with the problem of sin in man. It is not that we need Jesus to break down the barrier in God. The barrier which needs to be broken down is in man, not in God (2 Cor. 5:19).

The idea is “to appease, to conciliate to one's self, which occurs Luke 28:13; Hebrews 2:17. The noun means originally an appeasing or propitiating, and passes, through Alexandrine usage, into the sense of the means of appeasing, as here” [Vincent's Word Studies].

The Sermon Notebook - 2:1-2

INTRODUCTION. The Gospel According to John was written to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, God's Own Son Who was sent to die on the cross for our sins and to convince them to trust Him for salvation. The First Epistle was written - against a background of false claims made a developing heresy - to help believers to know they are saved. The heresy was a budding Gnosticism, a Greek philosophy which would become a major world view over the next several generations, one which would influence Eastern Mysticism, and in turn influence the New Age Movements of our day. In case you think "New Age" is old news, substitute the word, "Postmodernism." It is still with us, but it covers up much of the subversive, anti-Christian dogma. It is the driving force behind the more radical environmentalists, behind moral relativism, globalism, and many other influences that have found their way into education, politics, and even the church.

In Chapter One, especially in verses 1-4, John delivered a lethal blow to the Gnostic heresy - and to all similar heresies. In the following verses, he stresses the opportunity we have for fellowship with God. If we walk in the light, we may have fellowship with God; if we walk in darkness, fellowship with God is broken. Walking in the light means walking in the power of the Holy Spirit; it means living a holy life. While a lost person can only walk in darkness - he has never seen the Light of the World - Christians walk in darkness when they submit to their old sin nature, the sin principle which, though they are saved, is still seeking to assert itself in their lives. If we claim to have fellowship with God while we are walking in the power of the flesh (the sin principle, or old sin nature), we are lying and do not know the truth (1:6). If we deny that we have a sinful nature, or if we say we never sin, we are lying (1:8) and make God a liar (1:8). However: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:10).*

John will refute the claim of sinlessness - the claim that we do not sin at all, and the claim that we do not have a sinful nature - but first he will stress his desire that we do not sin, and then reveal the solution to sin in our life.

I. THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN THAT WE MAY NOT SIN, 2:1a.

A. John Addresses the Readers as "my little children."

To the aged John, this is a serious matter, and he addresses the initial readers as a father is addressing his children - or a grandfather addressing his grandchildren. There is a spiritual kinship between them. In the words, "my little children," we can learn a lot about how to view sin, and how to treat the sinner. Both sin and claims of sinlessness are uncompromisingly condemned, but the sinner is loved as a member of one's family. To John the response to sin was not to spread gossip, or lead others to condemn the sinner, but to encourage him and reclaim him. What is the first response in your church to the news that a member has "gotten into trouble"?

B. The Stated Purpose of This Epistle Is That We May not Sin.

The First Epistle of John is as relevant today as it was at the end of the First Century. Then, it was Gnosticism that tried to redefine sin and righteousness. Today it is

Postmodernism, more specifically, many New Age religious movements, philosophies, and claims. In his book, *Saviors of the Earth?*, Michael Koffman insists that New Age environmental forces have had a more radical influence on America than anything else since the Civil War. Gnosticism was introduced into the church when some of the Gentiles who were coming into the church in large numbers refused to totally give up this pagan philosophy. They sought ways to get the church to accommodate an ungodly world-view. If you think that is strange, consider how quickly America embraced evolution following the Scopes trial. Within fifteen years of that trial, evolution was being taught, not as an alternate view of origins, but as the only view allowed in many high schools and colleges across America.

What does all that have to do with 1 John? Everything! We must return to a biblical view of sin. Many of John's first readers were trying to minimize the importance of sin and its consequences. Moral relativism does the same thing today. Sin impacts lives, it impacts homes, it impacts governments, and it impacts churches. Contrary to the claims of many social scientists, only Jesus Christ can deal with sin. Secular counselors try to help rid people of guilt feelings. Only Jesus can get rid of the guilt! There is a lot of difference. Let's see how He does it.

II. IN JESUS CHRIST WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, 2:1b.

A. All People Commit Sins (See Rom. 3:23).

- 1) Lost people are dead in sin and face God as the Judge, Who will sentence them to hell.
- 2) Christians will commit sins, and must face God as a loving Father.
 - a. As our Father, He cannot ignore our sin.
 - b. His goal is to forgive and restore us to fellowship with Him.
 - c. His options in dealing with His children are limitless.
 - d. You had better take your sins seriously because He does.
- 3) "If Anyone Sins" is the condition of the second class, assumed to be true.

The idea is, "if anyone sins," and he will sin. We might say, "When you sin," because you will sin (see 1:6, 8). God's desire is that you will not sin, but He has made provisions for you when you do sin. This should not be taken lightly. If you sin with the attitude that you can live in a sin-and-repent cycle, you can be sure of two things: (1) you will not be forgiven, and (2) your heavenly Father is going to deal with you. Sadly, God may well be dealing with you right now and you do not even recognize it. Many Christians complain because they do not see God answering their prayers. He may well be withholding His answer until they repent. There are blessings available to those who are walking in the light - walking in fellowship with Him - that are not available to those who are walking in the darkness. Joy is withheld from those who persist in walking in the darkness rather than in the light.

B. Jesus Christ Is Our Advocate With the Father.

- 1) God's desire for us is that we do not sin.

2) But, when we do sin we have an Advocate.

The word translated "Advocate" (*parakletos*,) is a familiar one to students of the Gospel According to John, where the beloved disciple of our Lord, uses it four times. The interesting thing is that in the Gospel, it is used all four times to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

"While the Holy Spirit is Jesus' Advocate on earth, Jesus is the Advocate of believers in heaven. The term 'Advocate' portrays Jesus as both an 'attorney' and an 'intercessor,' one who represents the cause of believers in the presence of the Father. Thus, the contrasts within 1:6-2:2 depict two different approaches to sin" (Believer's Study Bible Notes).

3) You need to know when you need a lawyer.

ILLUSTRATION: Greg Irwin is the attorney for the Louisiana Baptist Convention. As a member of the Executive Board of the LBC, I had seen Greg and heard Dr. Dean Doster, our Executive Director, introduce him. Before, or after meetings Mr. Irwin and I would shake hands and exchange greetings. However, I never had any idea how much we needed him until I was asked to serve on the Documents Study Committee to try to determine how the documents of all agencies of the Louisiana Baptist Convention related to the convention and exactly how well they met the current requirements of laws of the State of Louisiana. I did not know what to expect when we met for our organizational meeting. For one thing, I did not expect to be elected vice-chairman of the committee. I thought they might reserve that position for someone who knew what he was doing, and if other committee members had known what they were doing the probably would have.

I had no idea how much we would need our attorney until he began to explain Louisiana Law to us and show us how our documents might be interpreted in light of existing state laws. When I began to see how much time Greg was spending on the work of our committee alone, the thought occurred to me that this was going to cost us a small fortune! It was then that Dr. Doster explained to us that Greg gives much of his time and his expertise to the causes of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He considers it his ministry. Now I appreciate Greg, not only because he serves as our attorney, but also because of the spirit in which he serves.

4) You had better have the right attorney. Over the years I may not have learned much about law, but I have learned a little about lawyers. For one thing, if you need an attorney, you had better be sure you find one you can trust. I also discovered that if you want to find a good, competent, trustworthy attorney, don't ask the average layperson to recommend one. Ask a competent Christian attorney to recommend one. I once listened to a conference I could not avoid in a restaurant. Some of the participants were that loud. At one point, one man said when we go to Baton Rouge, I think we need to get so-and-so (he gave the name) to go with us. I know him and he will really fight for something if he believes in it." I could hardly believe my ears. The last time I had heard that name some lawyers were trying to determine whether or not that was the worst lawyer in town!

5) Jesus is the only Advocate Who can represent us before our eternal Judge.

III. JESUS IS OUR PROPITIATION, 2:2.

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

A. Propitiation Carries the Idea of Satisfaction.

1) The sacrifice Christ made satisfies the just demands of God's judgment against sin (1:7). Christ is the only offering that satisfied God concerning sin (Rom. 3:25). In Hebrews 2:17, we read: *"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, **to make propitiation for the sins of the people**"* (NKJV).

2) Jesus is both our Advocate before the Father, and the propitiation for our sins.

Jesus Christ not only represents believers before God (as our Advocate, v. 1), He also provides the grounds for their forgiveness. Jesus is our Advocate, the High Priest Who offered the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and the atoning sacrifice.

"Jesus' provision of propitiation does not mean that the Father is uninvolved in salvation; in actuality, God's love is the ultimate source of Christ's work (4:9). The universal extent of the atonement of Christ is nowhere clearer than here (cf. John 1:29), but this does not guarantee that everyone's sin is automatically forgiven. Christ's work applies only to those who believe in Him (cf. 4:15; John 5:24)" [BSB].

B. Jesus Christ is the Propitiation Not Only for Us But Also for the Whole World.

1) His sacrifice is sufficient for any sinner. *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life,* John 3:15.

2) He does not want to see anyone perish. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,* 2 Peter 3:9.

CONCLUSION. How could be better conclude this than with another word from the beloved apostle: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

II. KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH ARE RELATED TO OBEDIENCE, 1 John 2:3-14.

2:3 - HOW WE ARE SURE. *"This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands"* (2:3). Here is **TEST ONE** for assurance of salvation - *"keeping His*

commands.” “We are sure” denotes knowledge gained by personal experience. “Commands” mean all of the commands of our Lord. The Greek means “keep on keeping His commandments.” The Scripture condemns religious perfectionists (1John 1:8-10), but strongly condemns the loose morals of the Gnostics who reveled in sinful excesses without shame. Those professing Christians who compromise morally and ethically today also stand condemned.

Years ago, the late Dr. J. Hardee Kenedy, Academic Vice-President of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and highly respected Hebrew and Old Testament professor, wrote a commentary on Jonah. Dr. Kennedy made a significant statement in his commentary that has an application here. He said, “Obedience to God is man’s most sacred obligation” [Kennedy, James Hardee, *Studies in the Book of Jonah*, Broadman Press, 1956, p. 4]. That is a lesson we often have as much trouble with as Jonah did.

2:4 - THE ONE WHO SAYS. *“The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”* One’s profession of faith is called into question by disobedience. If we love Him we keep His commandments. This is the condition of the third class, we may or we may not. The construction in the Greek means that we must keep on keeping His commands. While no one keeps His commands perfectly, there is a sincere desire to keep them, and a deep longing for forgiveness when we fall short.

2:5 - KEEPS HIS WORD. *“But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him.”* True believers keep on keeping His commandments. The one who is walking with the Light of the World keeps on keeping His commandments so as to make it his life style and his life commitment.

TEST TWO for assurance of salvation - keeping His Word. It is not by loud professions and shallow praises, but by consistent obedience. True believers keep on keeping His commands.

The Sermon Notebook - 2:3-5

INTRODUCTION. We often over-simplify biblical lessons. For example, I heard someone saying that there are just two themes in the New Testament: how to be saved and how the saved ought to live. That sounds good on the surface, but upon further consideration it is woefully inadequate. The central theme of the New Testament is Jesus Christ. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, so salvation is a major theme. However, the nature of God, the character of God, and the will of God are all major themes of the New Testament. And what about the ministry of the Holy Spirit? And then there is Eschatology, the study of last things.

While I am fully aware of the problem of over-simplification, I am going to risk that as I look at the three verses we are looking at today, 1 John 2:3-5. As we have seen the stated purpose in the Gospel According to John is to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and to persuade them to trust Him for salvation. Without a doubt, a central theme of the First Epistle is found in the words, “And hereby do we know that we know him...” (Vs. 3a). Those who subscribe to the doctrine of

perseverance of saints, or security of believers, will cite a number of proof texts in this little epistle. However, I want to focus on the assurance of salvation at this time.

It is with a sense of love, wonder, and gratitude that I read this little epistle and with the ears of my spirit hear my God say, "Yes, I have saved you and you are Mine. I love you, and I want you to know without a doubt that you belong to Me. Let Me give you some tests that will always help you to know that you know Me."

I. GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU KNOW HIM, 2:3-4.

A. This Assurance Is Intended Only for Those Who Have Been Born-Again.

1) We must never offer false hope to one who is not saved.

- a. Lost people may seek assurance in baptism.
- b. They may place faith in church membership.
- c. They may have confidence in good works.
- d. Many call God Lord who are not His.

"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. 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?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

I

2) You must be saved by grace, through faith, Eph. 2:8-9; Ga. 2:16.

3) The Gospel of John tells us how to be saved, John 3:1ff; 3:16-18.

I was intrigued by the testimony of the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman. I had known him for years. His father had been pastor of my home church and he and my pastor were friends. We spent a lot of time in the gym together when I was in seminary. As a matter of fact, on the day of my graduation, he sought me out and came over and said, "Johnny, do you think we might call a little conference in the gym later this afternoon?"

There are many things I still remember about Dr. Eddleman, both from seminary, personal visits, and from two revivals he preached for me. Before the revival my son John, seven at the time, and I picked him up at the airport in Monroe, Louisiana and drove him back to Bastrop. We had talked about a number of things on the trip back, and as we entered Bastrop, he suddenly, asked, "Johnny, what kind of car is this?" I answered, "It's a Buick." He said, "I think I have a Buick."

It took my mental computer a few seconds to compute that matter-of-fact statement. If I had made a statement like that my friends would be justified in recommending professional help for me. But to Dr. Eddleman, an automobile was simply something Mrs. Eddleman used to drive him to the airport. I don't think he could have cared less whether it was a BMW or a Volkswagen.

There are other things that stand out in my mind from that week. For one, he was writing a commentary on the Book of Acts, and he spent every spare moment working on it. For another, he spoke each morning at the Cherry Ridge Christian School and just over one hundred children responded to the simple presentation of the Gospel and made professions of faith that week. The pastor assured me that they had followed up on each profession of faith and that something like 92-94 of them were baptized in one of the local churches.

Another thing I will always remember is that Dr. Eddleman shared his personal testimony with us. He had made a profession of faith as a child but as a nineteen year old math major at Mississippi College he had an encounter with the Lord that totally overshadowed anything else that had ever happened in his life. He explained that he did not know for sure that he had not been saved as a child, but his experience at MC was so powerful that considered that his salvation experience and his call to the ministry. Then, from age nineteen to twenty-five, he allowed himself one date per year. He was so focused on his studies that he put his social life on hold. He assured me that his greatest regret was the way he had wasted so much time in his youth: "I could have learned five languages between thirteen and nineteen." There was a time when people called that dedication; today someone would probably come up with a psychological term for it.

If Dr. Eddleman, who went on to serve as seminary professor, college president, and missionary to Israel before serving a seminary president, could not tell for sure whether he was saved as a child, or college student, it is understandable that many others would have similar questions. The important thing is that after what happened in his life when he was nineteen he knew for sure that he was saved.

B. The Scripture Say That We Can Know That We Know Him, vs. 3.

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

1. The first "know" is in the present tense - we can know right now.
2. The second "know" is perfect active indicative.

A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, translates it, "Know we that **we have come to know** and **still know him** (emphasis added)." He explains the significance of the tense:

"The Gnostics boasted of their superior knowledge of Christ, and John here challenges their boast by an appeal to experimental knowledge of Christ which is shown by keeping his (*autou*, Christ's) commandments, thoroughly Johannine phrase (12 times in the Gospel, 6 in this Epistle, 6 in the Apocalypse)" [ATR, *Word Pictures in the NT*].

If you are a born-again believer, you can know right now that you have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior at some time in the past, and that you still know Him. God wants you to know this, and I must know it. That is the reason the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of this epistle.

C. We Have Assurance That We Know Him if We Keep His Commandments.

- 1) This does not say that we are saved by keeping His commandments.
- 2) Keeping His commandments is proof that we do know Him.
- 3) In 1 John 5:3, John expands this.
- 4) This teaches that we abstain from sinful practices because we love the Lord.
- 5) It teaches that obedience is not burdensome to God's children.
 - a. Witnessing is not burdensome to God's children.
 - b. Worship is not burdensome His children.
 - c. Ministry is not burdensome to true believers.
 - d. Stewardship is not burdensome to those who know that they know Jesus Christ.
 - e. Prayer is not burdensome to those who know Him.
 - f. Bible study is not burdensome to those who know Him.

D. John Amplifies This in Verse 4.

- 1) If you say you know God and do not keep his commandments, you are a liar.
 - a. This is strong language, (see also, 1:8, 10).
 - b. Please understand that it is God Who is calling you a liar, not the preacher.
- 2) Such a deceitful claim comes only from one who does not know the truth.
 - a. The truth includes sound doctrine.
 - b. The truth here includes the inner reality.

In John 14:6, we find the familiar words, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus is the eternal truth. The person who claims to know God but senses neither need nor desire to keep His commandments is deceiving himself. A lost person cannot know the truth, but a Christian can be confused if he is walking in the flesh. The Holy Spirit, who testifies to your spirit that you belong to God, is grieved by sin, and His influence is quenched when the individual persists in trying to serve God in his own power. We must first know Jesus as "the Way," and then we need to understand the doctrinal principle at work here. The love of God will manifest itself in obedience to God.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD IS MANIFESTED IN OBEDIENCE TO HIM, 1:5.

A. The Love of God Is Perfected in Those Who Keep His Word.

- 1) Obedience to God is a sacred obligation.

- 2) The Love of God is manifested through obedience.
- 3) The Love of God is perfected in those who are obedient to God.

The Greek word for perfect (*teleios*), may be defined as "having reached its end." That means complete or mature. A grown man is the *teleios* of a little boy. A great oak tree is the *teleios* of an acorn that fell to the earth and germinated many years ago. A mature Christian is an obedient servant of the Lord, whose obedience manifests both love for God and the love of God.

B. By Our Obedience We Know That We Are in God.

- 1) "In God" denotes a personal relationship with Him.
- 2) We are not positioned "in God" by good works (Eph. 2:9; Gal. 2:16).
- 3) Obedience is proof that we are "in God."

Obedience here denotes habitual obedience, not occasional acts of obedience. To the child of God, obedience is a way of life, a source of joy. It is never a burden. Someone has said, "I was often tired in the work, but never tired of the work." William Bradford, the governor of the Plymouth Colony of pilgrims, insisted, "Those who believe in the Holy Scriptures are bound to observe its teachings. Those who do not are to be bound by its consequences."

CONCLUSION. God wants you to know Him personally and intimately. If you have never been born-again, the Bible says this is the day of salvation. If you are searching for something but do not understand terms like "born-again," will you let me try to explain that to you and pray for you. If you are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, you will often look for assurance, and while there are many passages on the subject, it makes sense to begin right here:

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

2:6 - THE ONE WHO SAYS. *"The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked."* This demands "a continuous performance, not a spasmodic spurt" [ATR]. The word "should" denotes a personal obligation, not an obligation of some general nature.

AS HE WALKED. Greek scholars point out that this sums up the entire life of Christ as a life lived in obedience to the Father. His obedience to the Father was emphatic and continuous.

2:7 - AN OLD COMMANDMENT. *"Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard."* John uses a term of endearment, showing his love for those early readers of this letter. The Mosaic Law taught love for one's neighbor, but Jesus taught His disciples to love

their enemy. It is an ancient law which Jesus moved to a higher plain.

2:8 - YET I AM WRITING. *“Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”* (1 John 2:8). The commandment to love one another is as old as Adam and Eve, though violated as early as Cain and Abel. Yet, Jesus would have us implement it so that it is fresh every day.

2:9 - THE ONE WHO SAYS. *“The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness until now”* (1 John 2:9). Apparently there were those who make the claim whose daily life made them out to be a liar. A minister of music asked, “Do you know what’s wrong with out choir?” I asked him to enlighten me. He said, “We have choir members who don’t like each other; some of them can hardly stand each other.” Yet I would be surprised if any one of them would have told you he or she was lost.

The Sermon Notebook - 2:6-9

INTRODUCTION. Jesus came to seek and save the Lost. Paul was inspired to write: “That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

As I walked into the health club, I interrupted what must have been a very intense argument. As I approached the group one man glanced up and immediately exclaimed, “Here’s a preacher, ask him.”

Just what I needed! Before I could think of a way out, the same man insisted, “Go ahead and ask him!” I had walked in as the same person was using profanity in defending the Bible, so I was really hoping his adversary would let it pass. Wishful thinking! This was way back during the hostage crisis situation in Iran. What had upset the local insurance salesman was the statement made by the head of the history department at a nearby university: “You can’t blame those Iranians. They have no way of knowing that Christ ever lived. Name one First Century historian who mentioned Christ!” He then demanded the same of me: “Can you name one historian who mentioned Christ? I said, “Yes, I can.”

“NAME HIM, THEN!”, he demanded in a loud and arrogantly entertaining voice. He was enjoying it. I had an answer, but I suppose his arrogance stimulated a natural stubborn streak in me: “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

His volume in his New York accent coupled with his intensity had drawn a crowd and he was enjoying it. “Those were not historians, they were gospel writers. Can you name one historian who ever mentioned Christ?”

“Yes.”

“Name him.”

“Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

We went through three rounds of this before I assured him that I was not about to concede the point. For example, the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts have been irrefutably established to be an accurate, though not exhaustive record of the life of Christ and the spread of the Gospel in the first decades following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I assured him that, though I was not about to reject the historical validity of the four Gospels, I could give him the names of First Century historians who mentioned Christ. There was the Jewish historian Josephus, and two Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius.

I wished later that I had thought to remind the department head (who later expressed a preference for Communism over Capitalism) that no informed Muslim doubts that Jesus lived. They accept Him as a prophet like Mohammed.

The First Epistle of John refutes the Gnostic claim that Jesus only seemed to be human (1:1-4). In this little epistle answers that heresy and all similar heresies. It also reveals how we may know that we know Jesus Christ (2:3-5). This is amplified in verses 6-9.

I. ALL BELIEVERS SHOULD WALK AS JESUS WALKED, 2:6.

A. "He Who Says He Abides in Him" Ought to Live as Jesus Lived.

1) All true believers abide in Christ.

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

2) No unbeliever abides in Him.

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

3) If you abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit abides in you.

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; 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" (John 14:16-17).

4) To abide in Christ is to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

5) If you abide in Christ you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

6) If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will walk in the Spirit.

B. If You Abide in Christ You Ought to Walk as He Walked.

1) The words, "as He walked," refutes false doctrine. Jesus really was human. He

was flesh and blood. John and his fellow disciples touched him, saw Him, heard Him speak, ate with Him, and walked with Him. Jesus literally walked the dusty streets of Nazareth, waded the waters of the Sea of Galilee, and climbed the hill of Judea. He worked with His hands. He experienced hunger and thirst. And He had an incredible sense humor!

2) As Jesus walked among them He manifested His heavenly Father.

3) Jesus walked in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Is. 11:2).

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18-19).

4) Only on the Cross was Jesus forsaken by the Father and the Holy Spirit.

5) On earth, Jesus was the head of His Church.

6) During the Church age the Holy Spirit empowers the church.

"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

7) If you walk as Jesus walked, you will walk in the Spirit.

"That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 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" (Rom. 8:4-5).

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:9-10).

8) Both worship and ministry depend upon our being filled with the Spirit, Eph. 5:18f.

9) We become witnesses for Christ when we are filled with The Holy Spirit, Acts. 1:8.

10) The Holy Spirit empowers us to put on Christ (see Romans 13:14).

C. Let Us Look at the Principles of Putting on Christ.

1) The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ before the world.

2) The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ within believers.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

- a. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces the character of Christ.
- b. The presence of the Holy Spirit produces an understanding of Christ.
- c. The Holy Spirit writes God's Word in the Heart (not on stone).
- d. Christ is at home in the believer if he is filled with the Spirit, Eph. 3:16-17.
- e. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit Christ is glorified in the human body.
- f. The Holy Spirit sanctifies Christians.

Let me offer two verses for your consideration when thinking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. The first is Phil. 2:5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." When the Holy Spirit so guides you that you not only know the mind of Christ, but also begin to think like Christ, you are in the process of Sanctification.

The second verse is Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Whatever your position is on the doctrine of election, may we agree on this one thing? It is God's desire for every believer to be conformed to the image of His Son. I believe we can also agree on another point: you cannot conform yourself to the image of Jesus Christ. That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

II. THE NEW COMMANDMENT IS NOT NEW AT ALL, 2:7-8.

A. The Greatest Commandment Is Not a New Commandment, (2:7).

1) Though not stated here, the commandment denotes the two greatest commandments.

- a. We must love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- b. We must love our neighbor.

2) The repetition here is not without purpose.

- a. There are no wasted words in the Bible.
- b. Repetition is important to piano students.
- c. A football coach has the team to run plays in practice until they run them instinctively.
- d. A woman puts on make-up each morning.
- e. For a man, shaving is rather repetitive.

B. The Command Is an Old Commandment.

1) His commandment is not new "in kind."

- 2) "Not old" means not old "in kind."
- 3) They had always had the command to love one another.
- 4) It was old before John wrote these words.

C. On the Other Hand, He is Giving Them a New Commandment, 2:8-9.

- 1) The darkness of the old life of sin is passing away.
- 2) The true light was already shining in, and through their lives.
- 3) The darkness of the world has been invaded by the "true light" of Jesus Christ.
- 4) Jesus is the Light of the world.

CONCLUSION. Once the individual receives Jesus Christ as Savior, the Lord places the Holy Spirit in his heart nurture and develop him, to conform him to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). In the Holy Spirit, the believer is filled with power to be a witness Christ, to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, to understand and apply the Word of God, and the power to walk in the light - that is, to walk as Jesus walked. He is the one who enables us to love one another as God loves us. This is the Christ life, and it is available to those who come to Jesus for His great salvation.

2:10 - IN THE LIGHT. *"The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him."* The Greek construction shows both current and continuous action. The idea is that one should continue walking in the light, without interrupting that relationship by hating another person. The Old law, the Law of Moses commands us to love our neighbor. Jesus expands that to include our enemies. Those who walk in the light walk in the love God commands.

The answer to the moral and social problems of the world is directly related to the principle set forth here. The one who loves his brother remains in the light of the Word of God and this will help him with all relationship problems. If you love your brother you do not lust after his car, his house, his job, his reputation, his social position, his political position, or his position in the church. And you certainly do not covet his wife.

2:11 - WALKS IN DARKNESS. *"But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."* Hate reveals darkness and alienates one from God. The lost person is in darkness, and therefore cannot walk in the light. A clear manifestation of is spiritual darkness is hatred for one's brother or sister.

HAS BLINDED HIS EYES. The verb is first aorist active indicative (as in 2 Cor. 4:4) of the god of this age “to keep men from beholding the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. The first part of the verse repeats verse 1Jn 2:9, but adds this vivid touch of the blinding power of darkness. In the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky the fish in Echo River have eye-sockets, but no eyes” [Word Pictures in the NT].

The blessings of assurance are seen in 2:12-14.

- a. Forgiveness, v. 12.
- b. Knowledge, v. 13.
- c. Spiritual strength, divine truth, spiritual victory, v. 14.

2:12 - LITTLE CHILDREN. *“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name.”* He is inspired to write to them. “Little children” probably includes all of them, as in 2:1.

YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN. My elderly Jewish friend openly states that he is not religious; he is a scientist. Yet, on one occasion he seemed to lapse into a moment of reflection and made the statement, “I wish I could believe in heaven.” Sadly, he does not realize that his sins must be forgiven before he could go to heaven. His daughter has tried to witness to him but he rebuffs her. When a prisoner is standing before the judge awaiting the reading of the verdict, he tries to cover up his fears, but if he hears the words, “Not guilty”, his relief is apparent to everyone present. The lost sinner can hear no more precious words than these: “Your sins have been forgiven.”

NOTE: in the morning paper, October 4, 2006, my friend’s name was listed in the obituaries. He died October 3 without Jesus. My friend hated the name of Jesus in this world. Sadly, now he knows the truth. He “opened his eyes, being in torment.” My heart is broken because, unless my friend was saved in his last hours, he is already in hell.

2:13 - FATHERS. *“I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have had victory over the evil one.”* “Fathers” denotes those with experience or spiritual maturity. Vincent adds, “authority” (Word Studies in the N.T.).

BECAUSE. The more mature members, man and women, have grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and no one grows in the Lord without acknowledging that he is the eternal one, “the One who is from the beginning. In 1 John 1:1-2, John amplifies this:

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and de-

clare to you the eternal life that was with the Father.”

VICTORY OVER THE EVIL ONE. The language in the original denotes a permanent victory after a conflict. The masculine article shows that the “evil one” is the devil himself. As Jesus knew him well:

“You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a **murderer from the beginning** and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because **he is a liar and the father of liars**” (John 8:44, emphasis added).

2:14 - YOUNG MEN. *“I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God’s word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one.”* Young men are the hope for tomorrow. Certainly, young women are included in every hope and promise. It is possible that this implies that some of these young men would be serving as pastors, missionaries, and deacons in the future. Victory over the evil one is the reward of those who walk in the Light and faithfully read and apply the Word of God.

The Sermon Notebook - 2:10-15

INTRODUCTION. You either love God or you love the world. There is no other possibility. If you love God you love the things of God, but if you love the world you love the things of the world. Conversely, love for the things of God indicates a love for God, and love for the things of the world would indicate an affinity for the world. That to which you commit your thoughts, your energy, and your resources will let you know to whom you belong. The lost person cannot honor God, a carnal Christian dishonors Him, but only a believer who is walking in the light (a spiritual believer) can truly honor Him.

I. LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IS PROOF WE ARE IN CHRIST, 2:10-11.

A. He Who Loves His Brother Abides in the Light 2:10.

- 1) The subject is the believer. Only a believer loves in the spirit of Christ.
- 2) The object is another believer. In Christ we really can love believers who may not be pleasant.
- 3) The action is love. There are four basic kinds of love in the New Testament.
 - (1) There is a filial love, or love for one’s family.
 - (2) The second kind of love (Eros) is what we may call a romantic love.
 - (3) There is brotherly love (*phileo*).
 - (4) There is mental attitude love (*agape*).

The two kinds of love we will concern ourselves with today are *agape'* and *phileo*. While both words are simply translated "love" in the New Testament, each word has a specific and distinctive meaning. You often hear someone make the statement that *agape* is Christian love. Well, let's explore that for a minute. In John 3:16, God loves the world with *agape'* type love. Does this not prove that *agape'* is Christian (godly) love? Well, let's compare two verses.

When in John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son," it is with an *agape'* type love.

But in John 5:20, when "the Father loves the Son," it is with *phileo* type love.

What must we conclude from this? God loves both with *agape'* and *phileo* kind of love. But it gets more interesting. In John 3:19, we read, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light**, for their deeds were evil." Here, the word is *agape'*. When evil people love evil things here, it is with *agape'* love!

What does it all mean? For one thing, when God loves, whether he loves the world with *agape'* love, or His Son with *phileo* love, it is always godly love. It is logical to assume that when godly people are loving others in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are practicing Christian love. Any love that has God as the subject is godly love. God loves perfectly, whether in *agape'* love or *phileo* love. Christians love imperfectly, yet in the power of the Holy Spirit, they can love with a godly, or Christian love. Lost people cannot love with a godly love, even when they manifest more *phileo* type love than many Christians.

Then, how am I to understand what kind of love the Lord expects of me? *Agape'* is a mental attitude kind of love. It can be commanded. *Eros* cannot be commanded. If you tell John to fall in love with Susan you have all but guaranteed that he will stay as far from Susan as he can.

But what about *phileo*? Suppose a new neighbor moves next door to Christian family. We will call them the Smiths. The pastor goes to visit the new family and then stops by to ask the Smiths to visit their new neighbors - after all, they are Christians and good prospects for their church. He explains that the parents are about your age and their children are in the same grades as your children. The boys play football and the girls have similar interests. The pastor encourages them to cultivate a relationship with the new neighbors, assuring them that they will be best friends.

The Smiths go over with a casserole to meet their neighbors. The neighbors are busy and the children don't "hit it off." The things the pastor thought they might have in common are outweighed by the things they do not have in common. The Smiths are conservative Republicans and the neighbors are liberal Democrats. This is not a good mix. Both the Smiths and their neighbors face a dilemma: how can I love someone I don't even like? Will they feel guilty because God commands them to love one another when they don't even like one another?

The fact is, God does command *agape'*, a mental attitude love, a love that can be directed, controlled, and monitored by the mind. You can genuinely love (*agape'*) a person you have not yet come to love with a *phileo* type love. Christians are com-

manded to love one another, and among those you love with an agape' type of love, you will cultivate a deep and lasting friendship (*phileo*) with a some of them. Concentrate on the love God commands, the love you can direct with your mind. Seek the highest good for that person, beginning with his salvation, and continuing with service or ministry to that person. If the Lord so blesses you that you develop a close friendship (*phileo*) with that person you are blessed indeed.

4) The Holy Spirit enables you to love others.

*"Now hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit** who was given to us"*(Rom. 5:5).

5) The Bible is your infallible guide.

The believer should love (*agapao*) everyone. When that person is also a believer, you should also seek to cultivate a deeper friendship (*phileo*) him. Years ago, I stood a few feet from Tommy and witnessed to him in Jackson, MS. I had the privilege of leading him to trust Jesus Christ for his salvation. I also had an opportunity to visit with him a few months later and hear him say that he wanted to serve the Lord. I loved Tommy - I still do, even if I would have hesitated to invite him into my home until I got to know him a lot better. You see, Tommy had just committed a brutal murder and I met him right after his arrest while he was in jail awaiting trial. I saw him later at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I experienced an *agape'* type love for Tommy. Then, after we communicated by mail and visited in person, I sensed that in spite of what Tommy had done, I was developing a *phileo* type of love for him.

6) The Holy Spirit and the Word of God will help keep you from stumbling.

7) The one who loves others abides in the Light.

Jesus is the Light of the world. Those who love as Jesus loves keep on abiding in the Light. We do come to know Him by generating a warm feeling toward others; we love others because we have been transformed by the grace of God, and because we are being conformed to the image of the Son of God, which is what Sanctification is really all about. This does not mean that we keep on being a Christian as long as we keep on loving one another. It means that we have been placed "in Christ" by the grace of God and that we keep on abiding in Him.

B. Conversely, He Who Hates His Brother Is in Darkness.

1) Jesus is the Light and in Him is no darkness at all.

2) The darkness of the world cannot extinguish the Light of the World (John 1:5).

3) To fail to love as God commands is proof one is still in darkness.

4) He who does not love his brother is spiritually blind.

II. GOD'S COMMAND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER IS APPLICABLE TO ALL. 2:12-14.

A. John Applies It to "Little Children," 2:12.

- 1) In verses 12-14 John deals with various stages of development.
 - a. Little children are "babes in Christ."
 - b. Young men are spiritual adolescents.
 - c. Fathers are mature believers.
- 2) Their sins have been forgiven.
- 3) They are forgiven "for His Name's sake."

B. He Applies It to Fathers. 2:13, 14.

- 1) They have known Him (experientially) Who is from the beginning.
- 2) These are the more mature believers.

C. John Applies It to the Young Men, 2:13-14.

- 1) They have overcome the wicked one, 2:13.
- 2) They are strong, 2:14.
- 3) The Word of God abides in them, 2:14

III. DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD, 2:15.

A. Believers Must Not Love the World or the Things of the World.

- 1) Worldly people love the world.
- 2) The word for world here (cosmos) denotes the organized universe.
- 3) The cosmos is the kingdom ruled by Satan.

When Christians talk about loving the world we must remember that since America entered the Post-Christian era countless millions of people have been secularized through our process of education. Only Christians who have been trained in the home and in church may understand Scriptural terms and concepts. The New Age, or postmodern American youth, who has been taught to love Mother Earth and celebrate Earth Day, may be shocked to find that Christians are taught not to love the world. Christians should have the greatest appreciation for God's creation of all people on Earth, but we understand that Scriptural references to "the world" go far beyond geography and topography.

The world is that which is ruled by Satan, the prince of this world. We are talking about the world that hates Jesus Christ (John 7:7). Jesus said,

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

The world denotes a system of thought that is unalterably set against God - not the gods of the world, but against the Creator and Judge of the world. That enmity is especially focused on Jesus Christ - and not just some pseudo-Christ, but the Christ of the Bible.

The world is not only full of ungodly political systems, it is also full of ungodly religions. Make no mistake about it, Satan is the both the source and the force behind all false religions. Sadly, today in America courts, school boards, and legislative bodies, are working overtime in their effort to shackle the Gospel and promote Islam. Children have been required to play the role of a Muslim, with extra points going to the ones who came to school dressed as a typical Muslim. The University of North Carolina has decided that all incoming freshmen should read the Koran. How can you explain the popularity of Islam with so many politicians and media moguls? James 4:4 answers that:

"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."

B. You Cannot Love the Father and the World.

- 1) Proof of your relationship with the Lord is seen in your attitude toward the world.
- 2) Lost people are of the world and you expect them to be worldly.
 - a. Their worldliness make take the form of evil in its most vial forms.
 - b. It may, however, take on the form of social good.
- 3) Christians must avoid worldliness.

We are in the world, but we must not be of the world. You are just as worldly as your sins make you. You cannot count yourself as spiritual because you abstain from the sins of the flesh and the world. You are just as worldly as your jealousy makes you. Substitute for jealousy, hate, envy, lust, greed, bitterness, or covetousness. Through prayer, Bible study, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit we learn to set our affection on the things of God and to resist these sins.

CONCLUSION. You either love God or you love the world. If the things of the world claim your attention and your affection you are worldly. If you love God you love what He loves and hate what He hates. If you are abiding in Christ you will love God and you will love one another. How do I avoid worldliness, and how can I be sure that I am walking with my Lord? In Romans 12:1-2, Paul provides an answer:

"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."

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."

III. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD, 2:15-17.

2:15 - DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD. *"Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world..."* "World" refers to the moral, social, political, and cultural realm that is set against God. All the socio-political systems of the world are set in opposition to God. All the philosophical and psychological disciplines of the world have a great potential to spread darkness, and that is exactly what they do when they leave God out of the mix. The world, under the influence of the prince of this world, Satan, take one of two approaches in it opposition to God. First, the world seeks to persuade people to worship false gods. Second, there is the false worship of the true God. Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism offer the world a false god, Mormonism and the Jehovah's witnesses practice the false worship of the true God.

2:16 - LUST OF THE FLESH. *"...The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world."* "Lust" is the urgent and sinful desire to partake of things or participate in acts forbidden by God. John could have gone on to mention a whole list of sins, as Paul did in the first chapter of Romans, but these three examples will cover the sin principle if not all sins.

2:17 - THE WORLD. *"And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will remains forever."* The world (the moral, social, political, and cultural realm that is set against God) is headed for destruction. The world and the evil that exists in the world are passing away and will exist no more. The one who walks with the Lord "remain forever" (lives forever). That person has assurance of eternal life. The person who knows and loves God is one who has a personal relationship with God. He has entered into fellowship with Him and he will be protected in the judgment.

The Sermon Notebook - 2:16-17

INTRODUCTION. If you love God you will desire His will for your life. You either love God or you love the world. There is nothing in between. No lost person can love God, but a Christian who is not walking in the light (1:5-7) may love the world. His old sinful nature loves the world. In the power of the Holy Spirit the old sin nature is being crucified daily. That is Sanctification, a process through which the Holy Spirit nurtures us from spiritual infancy to maturity in Christ. No one can develop spiritual maturity on his own, but if he is obedient to the Holy Spirit, He will so focus his mind on Christ that the individual will be conformed to the image of God's precious Son (Rom. 8:29). Sanctification then is a process by which we grow in the Lord from the time of Justification until our Glorification. Our love for God and for one another is one of the most compelling proofs that we belong to Him. In verse 15, John wrote: "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).

I. THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY, 2:16-17a.

A. Lust of the Flesh Is of the World.

1) Lust denotes a strong, passionate desire.

a. Lost people can only love the world.

b. Christians can love the world

c. Christians who are walking in the light will love God instead of the world (1:5ff).

2) The "world" speaks of our sinful nature.

a. When you were saved you were given new life from above.

b. Until you are glorified you will struggle with your old sin nature.

c. Victory over the sinful nature comes only through the Holy Spirit.

d. Those who love God and walk in the light are spiritual.

e. Those who love the world and walk in darkness are carnal.

3) The Bible teaches that "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23).

"The soul who sins shall die," Ezekiel 18:4.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked," Jer. 17:9.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" Rom. 6:23.

4) Those who are saved should love the Lord, not the world.

"...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. 12:1b-2.

5) The world holds a strong attraction, even for the believer.

6) Love for the world is understandable, but foolish.

7) It is foolish to love what God has condemned.

B. The Lust of the Eyes Is of the World.

1) This points to a passionate desire excited by what the eye sees.

2) The lust of the eyes is seeing things from Satan's point of view.

- 3) The lust of the eyes leads to greed and covetousness.
- 4) The vision is the chief means of communication between external things and the flesh.
 - a. The flesh desires physical gratification.
 - b. The eyes excite the flesh.
 - c. The more the flesh is excited the more it seeks gratification.

I have talked with people who have confessed to a life of immorality before they were saved who told me that they still had to struggle with lust. Their eyes are constantly transmitting messages that will excite the flesh. They are the first to observe the dress that is a little too short - what message is she sending? They are the first to notice how tight the skirt is - is she trying to be sexy? They are the first to pick up on a "look" - is she coming on to me?

Does not a person who did not live an immoral life before he was saved have a problem with lust? Of course. But here is a difference; when you sin, memory is stored in memory cells. Each memory can become the source of a fresh temptation. A friend once confessed that after his wife became terminally ill with cancer, he would lie awake at night and grieve over his infidelity. He could see faces - and worse. One night he counted thirty-nine women with whom he had committed adultery. He knew God had forgiven him, but he was having a lot of trouble forgiving himself when he thought of the faithfulness of his beloved wife who was literally dying beside him.

While driving, I frequently listen to BBN and AFR programs. AFR frequently plays an ad for the AFR Internet filter, with the warning that no matter how strong the man is, he is not strong enough to watch pornography on the Internet without being affected by it. What is shocking is the fact that James Dobson's American Family Association reports an alarming number of church leaders who are addicted to pornography. Families are crushed when a family member is arrested for sending child pornography by the Internet. For the life of me, I cannot understand what kind of mind is excited by a picture of a child! Again, that is seeing from Satan's point of view.

There is one other thing that must be addressed here. Everywhere you go today you see young women walking around before the world dressed - or should we say undressed - in a manner that would surely have shocked the temple prostitutes at Corinth. Years ago, preachers condemned the strapless bathing suit; today it is the suitless bathing strap. It is bad enough when lost women dress like that, but it is a shame when Christian women dress in a manner that would have shocked their grandparents. Make no mistake about this, human nature has not changed. The lust of the eyes is the same today as it was generations ago.

C. The Pride of Life Is of the World.

- 1) The NASB renders it "the boastful pride of life."

The word for life used here speaks of the pattern of life. There are people whose life is filled with pride and they don't even know it. Satan cooperates with the flesh and the world in such a way as to confuse pride and humility.

- 2) The word denotes an arrogant pride.
- 3) This points to arrogant boasting about one's possessions or position.
- 4) It also denotes self-centeredness and self-conceit.
- 5) The lust of the flesh produces the pride of life.
- 6) The lust of the eyes can produce the pride of life.
- 7) Some boast, "I have my pride!", rather than repenting of it.
- 8) The pride of life is a mental attitude sin.
- 9) The pride of life never stands alone.
 - a. Bitterness testifies to a frustrated pride.
 - b. Vindictiveness speaks of an antagonistic pride.
 - c. Condescension proves one puts self above others.

Years ago, I heard my younger brother, Mike, refer to someone as "genuinely superficial." He added, "She has been a fake so long it's natural." I grew up in the Mississippi Delta at a time when my parent's generation was still talking about moving from the hills and clearing farm land in the Delta. Many of the people who were successful were simply genuine hard working people, but there were some who were still unaccustomed to their new found affluence and their position in some small town or village. I have often referred to them as pseudo-sophisticates. They knew all the rules of etiquette and applied them to some degree to everyone, but more strictly when among those they considered their peers.

You could hear the arrogance in their greeting. I worked for the U. S. Department of Agriculture to help pay for my education, and in that capacity I often talked with small farmers, and some "planters" - some called them turn-row farmers. They farmed from the cab of their pickup truck, some very naturally because of the size of their operations, others with an attitude that testified to the pride of life. Two brothers operated large farms in the same community. I spoke in the local church one Sunday and surprised one of them. The other one was not there. The one who was not there was the pleasant one. The one who was there was obnoxiously arrogant. He is the one who directed the music that Sunday!

The pride of life can manifest itself in the church. How many times has someone looked at visitors in a service and proclaimed, "Those are not our kind of people!" One lady, who always seemed very gracious when she was among her own "kind of people," stared at another lady who had picked up several children for Sunday School. She whispered to a friend, "I wish you would look at her - sitting up there with those children!"

D. The World is Passing Away.

- 1) Jesus warns us against setting our affections on the things of the world, Matt. 6:19-21.
- 2) This physical world will be destroyed by fire, 1 Peter 3:10-12.

II. THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD LIVES FOREVER, 2:17b.

A. Love for God Proves That We Belong to Him.

- 1) Lost people cannot love God.
 - a. A theist who is not a Christian may love the idea of a god.
 - b. A pagan may have some kind of love for a god that does not exist.
- 2) Christians should not love the world.
 - a. We must not place more value on the physical world than we do on God.
 - b. We must not love the things of the world more than God.
 - c. This does not keep up from caring for our environment.
 - d. It does demand a biblical world-view.

B. Doing the Will of God Proves We Have Eternal Life.

- 1) This is the opposite of loving the world.
- 2) To do the will of God is to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light (1:6-7).
- 3) God will enable His children to do His will.
 - a. He has given us His Spirit (John 14 and 16).
 - b. He has given us His Word (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16).
 - c. He has given us His promise (John 15:7).

CONCLUSION. What are we to do? Paul has an answer:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

IV. THE PERIL OF FALSE TEACHERS, 2: 18-29.

2:19 - THE LAST HOUR. *“Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard, “Antichrist is coming,” even now many antichrists have come. We know from this that it is the last hour.”* Few things have spawned more debate than Eschatology, the study of last things. I spent a lot of time on the subject when I was writing fifty sermon manuscripts from Revelation. These sermons are posted on the PastorLife.Com web site. I am conscious of the various interpretations of Revelation and the various positions on the return of Christ and the end of the world. I did not get too deeply into that in the series from Revelation because my purpose was to speak to the person in the pew of our church and try to pull back the veil so that they would have a little deeper understanding of, and a deeper appreciation for the Scripture dealing with end-time events, whether the term used was day, hour, or age. “The last hour” is the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ.

It is *anarthrous* here and marks the character of the "hour." John has seven times "the last day" in the Gospel. Certainly in verse 1Jn 2:28 John makes it plain that the parousia might come in the life of those then living, but it is not clear that here he definitely asserts it as a fact. It was his hope beyond a doubt. We are left in doubt about this "last hour" whether it covers a period, a series, or the final climax of all just at hand [Word Pictures in the NT].

In summary, we know that

- a. The Incarnation ended the old order.
- b. The antichrist is coming.
- c. Many antichrists have appeared already.
- d. The antichrists prove that this is the last age.

2:19 - THEY WENT OUR FROM US. *“They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.”* There have been many antichrists throughout the history of the church, but the antichrists are not a part of the true church. There will be one antichrist at the end, but there are many antichrists in the world today.

John had seen these antichrists come and go. He had seen them come into churches and go out again. His inspired conclusion is that “they went out from us, but did not belong to us.” We may be very hesitant today to label anyone and antichrist, but we have seen people come into the local church, manifest the spirit of antichrist, and then leave. We have also seen people come into the church who never manifested the first sign that they were born again believers in Jesus Christ. They attended a while and then left because they were not really of us. There is very little to keep the lost person attending worship services, though many will attend dinners, special programs, and concerts. They will go on trips and play basketball in the Christian Life Center, but must be entertained to keep them coming to worship services or Bible studies.

The Sermon Notebook - 2:18-19

INTRODUCTION. Before our Lord ascended to the Father He challenged Simon Peter to feed His sheep. Most Bible students can fill in the blanks here as they recall the exchange: "Simon, do you love me?"

"Yes Lord, you know I love you."
"Feed my sheep."

This is where most sermons on the passage seem to end, but it is not where Jesus stopped. He added:

Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish (John 21:18).

I have heard people stop with this verse and suggest that Jesus was telling Peter that in his old age some would have to lead him around because affirmatives associated with aging. Again, this is not what Jesus was saying. He continued:

This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me" (John 21:19).

Now, let's continue with John 21:20-21:

Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man (John)?"
Now, let's see how Jesus responded to Peter (John 21:22-24, (NASB):

If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple (John) would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Even though he does not use his own name, John here gives us that little something extra we have come to expect from the beloved apostle. For example in the account of the feeding of the five thousand men plus women and children, John tells us that the grass was green. A small detail, but one that tells us he was there. Here, John adds an editorial comment:

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things..., and knows that his testimony is true.

John did not remain until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, but he did remain alive and active until he fulfilled the purpose for which the Lord called him - and preserved him. After all the other Apostles had been martyred, John was inspired to write the Fourth Gospel, the evangelistic Gospel account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. That was somewhere around A. D. 86-88. He followed that with the three small epistles around A.D. 90, and the Revelation around A.D. 96.

The First Epistle of John was not afterthought on God's part. It is an integral and essential part of the New Testament. The message was one that was needed at the time it was written to expound sound doctrine and to combat heresy. It was God's inspired, authoritative response to the heresy known as Gnosticism, and it is still an adequate response to all similar heresies today, including New Age, or postmodern religious movements as well as the so-called Christian cults.

The Elder John was kept alive to write this epistle. While the Gospel of John was written to prove that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and to persuade people to trust Him as Savior, the First Epistle of John was written to combat false doctrine, and to give believers assurance of their salvation. If you ever have any doubt about your salvation you will want to spend a lot of time with this little epistle. But while you are reading it you will learn sound doctrine - which is nothing more than the truth God reveals in His Word and through His Spirit.

I. WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST PERIOD OF HUMAN HISTORY, 2:18.

A. John Calls It the Last Hour.

- 1) Paul warns us about the last days, 2 Tim. 3:1-5.
- 2) The writer of Hebrews refers to this period as the last days, Heb. 1:22.
- 3) The last hour covers the time between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.

B. There Is an Awesome Antichrist Coming, Rev. 13:1-10.

- 1) The Antichrist is the beast from the abyss, Rev. 11:7.
- 2) He is the man of lawlessness (man of sin), 2 Thes. 2:3.

C. There Have Been Many Antichrists Throughout the History of Christianity.

- 1) Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist, 1 John 2:22.
- 2) The spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3), denotes demonic forces behind the false prophets who deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.
- 3) John is speaking of those unbelievers who were members of the church.
- 4) They denied the incarnation of Christ.
- 5) They denied the relationship of Christ to His Fathers (2:21ff).

D. There Are Antichrists in the Church Today.

- 1) They are members of the visible church.

I was visiting with my long time friend, Dr. William Gordon, at his Family Eye Clinic in Monroe, LA, when the popular but sometimes controversial talk show host Moon Griffon joined us. We had not visited long before we connected liberal politics to the liberalism that permeates many churches today. Moon said, "There is one church here in town that is known as the "What's Happening Now Church!" When he mentioned the church - he didn't say whether they accept the title or not - I remembered the list of liberal leaders they have had from the day of their inception. I added, "And when the Monroe newspaper needs a comment from a theologian..." Moon finished my sentence - "They call that pastor." I am not saying that the pastor is not a believer. What I am saying is that many churches are receiving an unclear message, and a church that does not know sound doctrine is a breeding ground for the anti-christs of which John wrote. Now consider who these antichrists are.

- a. We are not talking about atheists here.
 - b. We are not talking about lost people outside the church
 - c. We are talking about lost people in the church.
 - d. We are talking about satanic influence on lost church members.
- 2) They deny either the humanity or deity of Jesus Christ.
- a. The Jesus of Mormonism is not the Christ of the Bible.
 - b. The Watch Tower Jesus is not the Christ of John 1:1ff.
 - c. The New Age Jesus is not the Jesus of Scripture.
- 3) Some deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 4) Others deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.
- 5) Many are substituting a unitary view of God for a Trinitarian view of God.
- 6) The satanic forces behind these antichrists focus their warfare against Christ.
- a. They are not called anti-Allah.
 - b. They are not anti-Hinduism.
 - c. They are not anti-Wiccan.
 - d. They are not anti animism.
 - e. They are not anti-New Age religions.
 - f. These people are adamantly anti-Christ.
 - g. They were not just there, they were false teachers.

Thousands today are filling mega-church plants - and small auditoriums - with a "what's in it for me?" attitude, perfectly content to sing, praise, and visit with one another. I have in mind those who enthusiastically raise their voices and their hands, but rebel at the thought of confessing sin, repenting with bitter tears, or prostrating themselves before the God Who is Holy. I am convinced that there are millions today are playing church rather than worshiping the God Most High. Was Paul warning of a time like this when he wrote:

*For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**; but after their*

*own lusts shall they **heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears**; And they shall **turn away their ears from the truth**, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:3-5, emphasis added).*

Now consider this disturbing, if dated article:

Today England is home for over one million Asian immigrants, of whom over 600,000 are Hindus. When we arrived in North Leicester as missionaries in 1973, fifty thousand became our neighbors: the families living beside us, our doctor, greengrocer, pharmacist, and best friends.

Some surmise that if geographical isolation from India does not cause Indians to forsake Hinduism, western culture will. Instead, in the European religious climate of universalism, Hinduism thrives. Empty church buildings are converted into temples. **Carey Hall, the large Baptist church named after William Carey who left his pastorate in Leicester in 1783 to reach Hindus in Burma and India, now houses Leicester's largest Hindu temple.** Public school buildings are rented weeknights to teach Indian languages and religions. ---- From Neale & Barbara Goetsch

II. THEY PROVED THEY WERE ANTICHRISTS BY LEAVING THE CHURCH, 2:19.

A. John Draws Some Conclusions About These False Teachers.

- 1) They were members of the local church.
- 2) However, they were never really a part of the true church.
- 3) If they had been truly saved they would have continued in the faith.
- 4) Their leaving the church proved they lacked a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

B. We May Draw Some Conclusions About Antichrists Today.

- 1) We can expect them to teach false doctrines.
- 2) We can expect them to be practical atheists, even if they claim to be theists.
- 3) We can expect them to seduce others if they have the opportunity.
- 4) If they remain in the church we can expect them to cause trouble.

C. We Can Expect Them to Leave the Church Under Certain Conditions.

- 1) If they are exposed they will leave the church.
- 2) If they cannot run it or ruin it, they will leave.
- 3) If Jesus Christ is truly glorified they will leave.

- 4) Some people should leave the church.
 - a. If they are not “of us” we can expect them to leave.
 - b. We must not try to keep some who would leave.
 - c. If they do not repent and confess Jesus Christ as Lord they should go.
 - b. If the Holy Spirit is really in control we can expect them to leave.

- 5) Some people should be asked to leave the church.
 - a. There was a time when churches practiced expulsion.
 - b. Some had rather run others off than to leave themselves.
 - c. If Satan is in charge of church you cannot expect antichrists to leave on their own.
 - d. Because of some abuse, most churches ceased to discipline members.

CONCLUSION. Your faithfulness is a testimony to the value you place on your relationship with Jesus Christ. What you understand about Jesus and what you teach about Him testifies to your personal knowledge of Christ as Lord in your life. Jesus Christ died publicly on the Cross for your sins. He expects you to profess Him publicly as the Lord of your life. Simply stated, if you want people to believe your faith is genuine, you must live a Christ-like life before them. That includes being faithful to His church. By remaining faithful to His church you offer proof that you know the Lord of the church.

2:20 - THE HOLY ONE. *“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.”* The Holy Spirit will teach believers and anoint them with power. This is “an anointing” from the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, certain people (kings, for example) were anointed with oil to signify that they were being set apart for an office or ministry. All believers have an anointing from the Holy One in that they are set apart for the glory of the Lord. The antichrists may pose as super-saints, or make claims that they are the equal of Christ, but true believers are the ones who have the anointing of from the Holy One.

2:21 - THE TRUTH. *“I have not written to you because you don’t know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth.”* The truth is from the Holy Spirit, lies are from Satan. He is an antichrist who denies that Jesus came in the flesh. John will address this again:

This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit who does not confess Jesus] is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now (1 John 4:2-3).

Jesus is the Truth, and He sends His disciples out into the world with the truth about His salvation. The truth is known by various designations but it must always be remembered that the

Lord places great emphasis on sound doctrine, which is another name for truth.

2:22 - HE IS THE ANTICHRIST. *“Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Messiah? He is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”* Jesus taught that the devil is a liar: “When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because **he is a liar and the father of liars**” (John 8:44b). An individual is never more like the devil than when he or she lies. The greatest lie is that Jesus is not the Messiah. There are a lot of very vocal liars in the world today.

By the definite article, the liar, the lie is set forth in its concrete personality: the one who impersonates all that is false, as antichrist represents every form of hostility and opposition to Christ. The denial that Jesus is the Christ is the representative falsehood. He that denies is the representative liar [Vincent's Word Studies in the NT].

2:23 - NO ONE WHO DENIES. *“No one who denies the Son can have the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well.”* No one who denies the Son knows the Father, regardless of rhetoric about diversity and inclusion in the world today. The Son reveals the Father (John 1:18; John 14:9). Our only access to the Father is through the Son (John 14:6). “Confession of Christ before men is a prerequisite for confession by Christ before the Father (Mat 10:32; Luke 12:8)” [Word Pictures in the NT].

The Sermon Notebook - 2:20-23

INTRODUCTION. In verses 18 and 19, John paints a sobering, if not shocking picture of the work of antichrists within the church. In corporate America we often hear of hostile take-overs. Be assured that the antichrists within Christendom, within denominations, and within the local church are bent on a hostile take-over of the church. Quite literally, they are hell-bent on taking over the church, or to be more accurate, Satan, the prince of this world, is hell-bent on using them to take over the church.

The issue is not just what has happened to churches and denominations, but what has happened - and is happening - on the individual level. Are church members being conformed to the image of Christ, or are they being conformed to the world? The antichrists, as we have seen in verses 18 and 19, are lost church members who would diminish either the deity or the humanity of Jesus Christ. If these people have their way they would take over the church by seducing Christians who are not grounded in sound doctrine.

I. TRUE BELIEVERS ARE CONTRASTED WITH THE ANTICHRISTS, 2:20-21.

A. “But You” Contrasts True Believers With False Believers.

1) “Conversion” implies a change.

2) "Repentance" demands a different walk.

- a. You are either walking in the light or in darkness (1 John 1:7).
- b. Believers do not walk with unbelievers.
- c. Non-believers cannot walk in the light.
- d. Believers cannot walk as they formerly walked.

B. True Believers Have an Anointing from "the Holy One."

1) John did not say some of you have an anointing.

2) "You" means all true believers in Jesus Christ.

- a. When you are saved you are indwelt by the Holy One.
- b. We must be continually filled with the Holy One.

There are three occurrences of "anointing" (*charisma*) in the New Testament. They are found here and in verse 27. This anointing refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer (see also, John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The word is translated "unction" in the KJV. The anointing, or unction is totally and completely the work of the Holy Spirit. No one is self-anointed, and no one can be anointed by another.

3) "The Holy One" is the Holy Spirit.

- a. No lost person has ever been anointed by the Holy Spirit.
- b. No one other than the Holy One has ever anointed anyone.

C. "You Know All Things" Because You Are Anointed By the Holy Spirit.

1) This does not encourage a know-it-all attitude.

2) This does not mean that you do not need to study to know truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

3) What it means is that you discern between truth and error because you have been anointed by the Holy Spirit.

D. Now, Let Us Look at Some Principles of This Anointing.

It seems that too many see this anointing as some special experience which falls upon certain individuals who are particularly "blessed." Others see this as a supernatural experience which may happen to them at various times in response to their quest through especially intense prayer, fasting, or some other service. However - and we must understand this - when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you simultaneously receive God the Father as your Lord, and the Holy Spirit as the indwelling presence of God. You are miraculously, supernaturally indwelt once for all time by the Holy Spirit at the point of your salvation. Now, does that mean He is through with you at that point?

Absolutely not! When you receive the Holy Spirit, He enters your life to empower you

to walk in the light, to walk as Jesus walked, to walk with Jesus Christ in the spirit. He is your divine Guide and Teacher, calling to your remembrance Scripture He has stored up in your spirit to enable you to make the right decisions and to honor our Heavenly Father.

The goal and ministry of the Holy One in the life of the believer is to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). One way He does that is to lead us to think the thoughts of Jesus - "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

Now, let us look at some of the things involved in this anointing.

- 1) Anointing denotes an appointment or commission.
 - 2) You are anointed when you receive the Christ, the Anointed One.
 - 3) You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the time of your salvation.
 - a. You are indwelt once for all time by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. You receive all of the Holy Spirit you are ever going to receive at that time.
 - c. Sanctification has to do with how much of you He has.
 - 4) Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of his salvation.
 - 5) This anointing has the effect of ordaining us to the priesthood of believers.
 - a. In the Old Testament, Oil was placed on the head.
 - b. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is placed in the heart.
 - 6) Every believer is affected by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. You may be being filled daily with the Spirit.
 - b. You may be grieving the Holy Spirit through sin (Eph. 4:30).
 - c. You may be quenching the Spirit by not yielding to Him (1 Thes. 5:19).
- E. Look at Some of the Doctrinal Implications of the Anointing by the Holy One.
- 1) You keep on having this anointing from the point of your salvation.

We are not talking about "how I feel in my heart" at any particular time. My feelings change from time to time, often depending on the mood I am in at the time, but more often in response to my circumstances. There are a lot of spiritual quacks out there and they may deceive the young as well as the ignorant believer. They need to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in nurturing them. We are talking about the need for continuous filling by the One who indwells us.

- 2) This indwelling is a doctrinal fact.

"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9).

"This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:2-3).

3) The indwelling is called unction (anointing) in 1 John 2:20.

4) The indwelling is for all believers in the church age.

a. Jesus promised it in John 7:39: *" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

b. He promised believers the Holy Spirit in John 14:16: *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."*

5) The indwelling of the Spirit means that Jesus Christ is in the heart, Rev. 3:20; Rom. 8:10f.

6) The indwelling by the Holy Spirit is different from filling by the Holy Spirit.

a. The indwelling comes at the point of salvation (Gal. 4:6).

b. The filling is continuous (Eph. 5:18ff).

7) The purpose of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is given in Acts 1:8.

8) Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).

F. Consider the analogy to the anointing of the priest with oil

1) Oil lubricates - the Holy Spirit prevents friction.

2) Oil aids in healing - the Holy Spirit heals wounds.

3) Oil was a fuel for lamps - the Holy Spirit illuminates our hearts.

4) Oil generates power - the Holy Spirit empowers believers (Acts 1:8).

5) Oil adorns and grooms - the Holy Spirit makes believers more attractive.

II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO THE FATHER, 2:22-23.

A. He Who Denies That Jesus Is the Christ Is a Liar.

1) The Jehovah's Witness translation lies: Jesus is not "a god."

2) The Mormons are wrong: He was never Lucifer's brother.

- 3) The Muslims are lying: Jesus was not just a great prophet like Mohammed.
- 4) The atheist is lying: Jesus is the Son of God, manifested with power.
- 5) The New Agers are lying: the Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus of New Age religions.
- 6) The liberals are lying: Jesus is not a way to God, He is the only way to God.

B. He Is Antichrist Who Denies the Father and the Son.

- 1) The antichrists of John's day were Gnostics who denied that Jesus came in the flesh.
- 2) They denied the relationship between the Father and the Son.
- 3) Antichrists are active in the church today.

One does not have to deny the existence of God, or of Jesus Christ to be an antichrist. All he has to do is to teach a false doctrine about the Father or the Son. That is happening all the time, and sadly much it is done in one church or another. Homosexuals are ordained to the ministry, homosexuals are united in marriage, and "popular" theologians quoted in the newspapers are pushing diversity -they are inclusive, not exclusive. They selectively quote Scripture to justify ungodly behavior. These modern antichrists are open to almost anything, except Jesus Christ.

Let me recommend two books Let me quote from the first chapter of the book, *The first, The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, by Leon J. Podles:

"Despite the constant complaints of feminists about the patriarchal tendencies of Christianity, men are largely absent from the Christian churches of the modern Western world. Women go to church; men go to football games. Lay men attend church activities because a wife, mother, or girlfriend has pressured them.

The strategy of American revivalists in the Second Great Awakening in the 1830s was to approach men through their wives: women were converted first, and then they exerted more or less successful pressure upon fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons to join them in the church" (p. 3).

Podles reveals just one of many evidences of a hostile take-over of churches and denominations in the last century and a half. The second book, *The Empty Church*, by Thomas C. Reeves (Free Press, 1996), is even more disturbing. The response of "mainline Protestant" leaders in America led Reeves to conclude that the old mainline churches had lost much of their influence by the 1990s:

"Indeed, an abundance of literature revealed that these once prominent and affluent denominations were declining and in disarray - ironically, at a time when religious belief in America seemed to be extraordinarily high."

Let me add an editorial here: religious belief (in the 1990s) in America was in the

process of supplanting secular Humanism as a world-view. Gallup polls indicated a revival of faith in America. At first, church leaders thought the church was winning the battle against Humanism. Such was not the case. What was happening was that New Age (now Postmodern) religious movements were injecting the old humanists with something spiritual. Gallup asked, not do you believe in the God of the Bible, but, "do you believe in God, or a god-like force in the universe?" Many psychologists, sociologists, politicians, educators, and some religious leaders were ready for the change, and sadly, many Christian leaders interpreted the change as a genuine revival. Little did they realize that New Age religious philosophy would be harder to combat than a blatant atheistic, evolutionary humanism.

As Reeves continued his study of the old mainline churches, he finally asked the question: Do churches, well, rally matter any more? His "mainline" churches consists of what he calls the "seven sisters" of American Protestantism: "the American Baptist Churches of the USA, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church" (p. 1). Now consider these quotes from Reeves, who grew up in the Lutheran church and then joined the Episcopal Church, of which he says, "Since 1976, I have been involved in organized efforts to move the Episcopal Church in a direction it chooses not to go." He is a trustee of an Episcopal seminary. The following quotes will underscore his concern for his denomination and others.

"The mainline churches have played major roles in the shaping of the United States. For centuries, membership was often a sign of respectability, prosperity, and upward mobility. (These churches) still lead other Christians in income, education, and property ownership.

And yet today, these one-time pillars of the religious establishment are frequently ignored, their power to bestow social prestige has greatly dissipated, and their defining theological doctrines have been largely forgotten. It has often been noted that mainline church membership sharply declined in recent decades. But in fact the strength of mainline churches has been eroding for the better part of (a century). Some observers have predicted their eventual demise. Even friends and insiders have acknowledged that the mainline churches have lost their impact, their zeal, even their meaning (p. 2).

We may learn much about what has been called the 'cultural war' by studying the deterioration of the religious bodies that once established spiritual and moral standards.

But there is more to this than current events. The critical issue, in my judgment, has deep roots in Christian history, so deep that it was addressed by St. Paul. Is there truth, supernaturally revealed in Christianity, that lies beyond our present understanding of things, truth that is unchanging and absolutely vital to our present and future?

This is not about the acceptance or rejection of fundamentalism; for most Christians, certainly in the mainline churches, that struggle ended long ago. The issue involves the line that must be drawn, by all thinking Christians, between certain knowledge and revelation. What, in short, are the essentials of the religion without which it loses its

authenticity and power? And what are the implications for personal conduct?"

Reeves stresses that, though he sees all these problems within his denomination, he is not about to become a Baptist or a Pentecostal. He likes the dignity of the rituals in his own church. We might help him if he would allow us to take him back to the time the mainline churches ended their "struggle" with regards to fundamentalism. Did they reject a fundamentalist movement within their churches, or did they reject the fundamentals of the faith? Now let me follow this with one quote from C. S. Lewis:

Advice from one devil to another on how to destroy a Christian's faith:
"Talk to him about 'moderation in all things.' If you can get him to the point of thinking that 'religion is all very well up to a point,' you can feel happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all - and more amusing."

C. He Who Acknowledges the Son Has the Father Also.

- 1) We are saved by the Triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit.
- 2) Those who know the Son know the Father.
 - a. Only those who know the Son know the Father.
 - b. There are not many ways to the Father.
 - c. Everyone is not going to Heaven.
 - d. Most people will reject Jesus Christ, and spend eternity in Hell.
- 3) Jesus saves, and Jesus alone (Acts 4:12).

CONCLUSION. Let John conclude this message for us: "*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*"

2:24 - WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD. "*What you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father.*" Greek scholars point out that the first part of this verse is most emphatic: what you have heard must remain in you if you are to remain in the Son and in the Father. The Bible is clear on the subject of security of saints. Jesus could not have been any clearer when He said, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Once I receive Jesus as Savior, I cannot be separated from Him. Does not this verse call that into question? Not at all. I cannot lose my Savior, but if I do not make a commitment to walk in the light, to live in obedience to Him, I will not remain in fellowship with Him. All believers break fellowship with him at times and must repent (1 John 1:9).

2:25 - THE PROMISE. "*And this is the promise that He Himself made to us: eternal life.*" Eternal life is assured to all who believe in Jesus. Those who are born again by faith in Him will

“remain in the Son and in the Father” (vs. 24). “He Himself” is Jesus. John, the elder statesman of the church at this point, heard Jesus make the promise. The promise He made is eternal life. Believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. We have His word on it!

2:26 - I HAVE WRITTEN. *“I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.”* False teachers threaten our fellowship with God, but those who abide in the Holy Spirit will grow in fellowship with the Father. We must remind ourselves that those who try to deceive us do not wear badges that identify them as false teachers and deceivers. They may even insist that they are doing what they are doing because the Lord anointed them to do it.

2:27 - THE ANOINTING. *“The anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you don’t need anyone to teach you. Instead, His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in Him.”* The BELIEVERS STUDY BIBLE is helpful here:

The “anointing” of the Holy Spirit counteracts the deception of these false teachers (v. 26). This verse does not eliminate the need for human teachers; rather, it highlights the adequacy of the Spirit’s instruction and guidance. The Spirit enables the believer to distinguish the truth of Christianity from the deceit of heretical propaganda [BSB].

TEACHES YOU. The Scriptures are the text for our education in the nature, character, purpose, and commandments of God. The Lord calls out godly teachers to teach His children. The Holy Spirit will call those lessons to mind so that we can make an application of the principles and commands of the Lord in our daily life.

2:28 - REMAIN IN HIM. *“So now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”* “Remain in Him” here may be taken as imperative, or indicative (you remain, rather than the imperative, Remain in Him!). The point is that we have a position in Him, by His grace.

SO THAT. When Jesus appears, true and faithful believers will welcome His return with boldness.

Paul was inspired to write, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16, NKJV). Those who agree with Paul will most assuredly not be “ashamed before Him at His coming.” When I look at moral, social, economic, and political in the world today, I am convinced that the only real solution to the problems of the world is in His return. I anticipate His return and welcome it.

2:29 - HE IS RIGHTEOUS. *“If you know that He is righteous, you know this as well: everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.”* Christians are exhorted to remain in fellow-

ship with God and practice righteousness. “If you know” is the third class condition, you may know that He is righteous, or you may not know it. Those who know that He is righteous and follows Him in righteousness is born of Him. There is no other way anyone can live the Christian life.

For the first time, 1 John speaks of Christians as those “born” (gennao, Gk.) of God (cf. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). This imagery shows that the believer’s spiritual life results from the redemptive work of God. As a result, believers can legitimately be called God’s “children” (3:1) [BSB].

The Sermon Notebook - 2:24-29

INTRODUCTION. Theology is the study of God, and though theologians use the term on a regular basis, it is not a term the average person uses every day. The word “doctrine” may be less intimidating to some people, but one seldom hears the average person going around talking about “sound doctrine.” So what word would we use to emphasize to new believers the importance of sound doctrine? We may use the word “truth” to emphasize sound doctrine, but in a day when so many who profess to be believers look to the church to make them feel good about themselves, and Sunday School as a place for fellowship, I am not sure many people desire anything beyond the basics. The “me” people are concerned about what they are going to get out of the Christian experience. They will change church, or denominations at the drop of a hat. All they have to hear is that the music down the road is a little more exciting. They think of prayer simply as a way of getting something out of God, not in terms of what God is getting out of them.

What are we to do? Most preachers know what popular preaching is, and there must be a temptation to give the people what they want - and if the preacher is more concerned with nickels and noses than feeding the sheep, he may well try to give them what they want. However, Paul challenges the preacher to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, **exhort, with great patience and instruction**” (2 Tim. 4:2, NAS). The KJV has “doctrine,” while the NKJV has “teaching.”

I. LET SOUND DOCTRINE “ABIDE IN YOU,” 2:24-27.

A. This Verse Offers a Contrast Between True Believers and Those Who Deny Christ, 2:24.

- 1) Antichrists and liars deny the Father and the Son (2:22f).
- 2) But you (true believers) should abide in sound doctrine.

They had been taught sound doctrine from the beginning. Can you imagine any church ever having better instructions than this church had received from Paul, its founder; from Timothy; and for many years, John the Beloved Disciple? A friend told me they had invited a lay renewal team to lead a service in their church. He told me he was disturbed by some of the things he had heard in the service. Then when he walked out into the parking lot he saw a fellow member, a man was always very quiet

and reserved. As he walked toward his friend he was surprised to see the man shaking his head in an agitated manner. He said, "If there had been a lots person in that service there is not way he would know how to be saved!"

When I became pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Nederland, Texas in the early seventies, I discovered that my predecessor, George Clark, had left to edit the Church Administration Magazine for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources). Members told me that George sensed that his call was the edification of the saints. George's predecessor had resigned to teach Bible in a Baptist university. Manley Beasley had been pastor a number of years before I moved there and his sister, who handled his scheduling, was an active member. It was obvious to me that these people had been led by some pastors who had an understanding of their calling.

The late Dr. Stephen Olford often declared that there is a famine in America, but it is not a famine of food; it is a famine of expository preaching. What he was saying was that too many people are not being taught sound doctrine. Their pastor may have lost the sense of a high calling, a calling that should leave him humbled, not proud. I met Stephen Olford in 1978 when we both received our graduate degree from Luther Rice Seminary. Spiros Zodhiates was sitting by Stephen Olford (they received the Doctor of Theology degree, the rest of us the Doctor of Ministry degree). When I visited with Stephen Olford I had an impression I will never forget. As we talked, I became more and more aware of the fact that I was standing in the presence of a man of great humility and meekness - and a man of great power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every preacher of the Gospel must have a high sense of his calling. And every church member needs to have a high sense of his pastor's calling. Regardless of the preaching style, volume, or personality of the speaker, every preacher should consciously teach people the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, every listener needs to understand that he or she is listening to a man of God, called to preach the Word of God; which places that listener under a divine obligation to pray for the one who is preaching the Word, to listen and learn, and to make an application of the message under the leadership, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. What You Hear Should Abide in You.

1) What they had heard was what their preachers had preached and teachers had taught.

2) When the preacher was preaching they should listen and learn sound doctrine.

Without a doubt, some of them were listening, but some of them probably were not listening. "If what you heard" is a condition of the third class, you may or you may not - you may let the Gospel abide in your heart, or you may not. The subjunctive mood shows potential. The results are based upon your willingness to receive the Word and permit the Holy Spirit to illuminate your heart that you might understand it, and guide you that you might make an application of it. If you are willing, the Gospel

will keep on being in your heart, and you will keep on abiding in the Word.

3) When the Gospel is preached today, people should be listening and learning.

Jesus speaks to our hearts when we hear the Gospel preached. When Paul wrote, "So then, **faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God**" (Rom 10:17), the context has to do with the preaching of the Word. This does not minimize Bible reading or Bible study, but it establishes a very high view of preaching. When the Gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus will affirm that message in the hearts of believers.

The preacher must have a high view of preaching, and never preach except under a divine anointing to preach the Word. It also means that those who hear him should do so with hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit to hear the word in humility. When that happens. The Holy Spirit will store what he hears in his heart for future use. Then the Holy Spirit can bring it into his conscious mind when he needs to make certain decisions.

C. If the Word Abides in You, You Will Abide in the Word.

1) There is a very important message for us here.

- a. You can hear the Gospel preached, and you can learn from hearing.
- b. You are in charge of the listening and learning part.
- c. The Holy Spirit is in charge of the abiding part.
- d. You either hear or read and you learn on one level.
- e. What you learn in you mind, the Holy Spirit will store in your spirit.
- f. What He stores in your spirit, He will "recall" as you need it.

g. When you need to make decisions, the Holy Spirit will call to mind Scripture you need to make those decisions.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26).

In order for you to recall the Word you must have heard it or read it and the Holy Spirit, Who inspired ever word of it, must miraculously store sound doctrine - Gospel truth - in your spirit (in your heart) for your edification and guidance. This is true spirituality. I am sorry, folks, but true spirituality does not have as much to do with how high you jump as it does with how straight you walk when you come down.

II. GOD'S ANOINTING ABIDES IN THE HEARTS OF BELIEVERS, 2:25-27.

A. And This Is the Promise That He Has Promised Us; Eternal Life 2:25.

If this verse seems not to be a part of this context, think again. Every person who receives Jesus Christ by grace through faith receives eternal life. Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). Your eternal salvation rests in the promise of our Lord. I am as secure in Him as His promise of eternal life.

Furthermore, the promise of eternal life is the answer to critics of the faith, atheists, agnostics, and false teachers who profess faith in Jesus Christ. This was the first line of defense against Gnosticism, as it is the first line of defense against cults and paganism today.

When in doubt about your salvation, remember the promise. When you are assaulted on all sides by the forces of the devil, remember the promise. When you are confused by false teachers, remember the promise. When others propagate a false religion and try to convert you, remember the promise.

B. "These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you" 2:26.

- 1) "These things" are the words of this epistle.
- 2) "These things" denote sound doctrine.
- 3) "These things" include the promise of eternal life.

C. The Lord Places His Spirit in You.

- 1) This is the "indwelling" of (by) the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Those who are indwelt need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

D. You Do Not Need Anyone to Teach You.

- 1) This seems to contradict clear teaching about teaching and exhortation.
- 2) It seems to fly in the face of the hearing and learning of verse 24.
- 3) When there seems to be a contradiction we need to dig a little deeper.

Ryrie, in his Study Bible Notes says that "The Spirit whom they had received would teach them how to distinguish truth from error (John 16:13)." He adds, "The Spirit may use human teachers to accomplish this (Eph. 4:11-14)." Both points are worthy of our attention. However, the emphasis is on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping the Christian distinguish between sound doctrine and false teaching. No matter how brilliant or gifted a teacher may be, only the Holy Spirit can affirm within your heart whether what you are hearing is Scriptural truth.

The Holy Spirit will enable you to distinguish between Christianity and Islam. The Holy Spirit will enable you distinguish between the Jesus of God's inerrant Word, and the Jesus of Mormonism or any of the New Age movements. The Holy Spirit will help you distinguish between the true Word of God and a corrupted copy like that of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

III. THOSE WHO ABIDE IN CHRIST WILL NOT BE ASHAMED AT HIS COMING, 2:28-29.

A. God's Children Are Admonished to Abide in Christ, 2:28.

- 1) You will look to the Lord's return with confidence.

- a. This does not mean if He returns.
 - b. It means when He returns.
 - c. "That when" means that the time of His return is uncertain.
- 2) Those who are abiding in Christ will not be ashamed before Him at His coming.
- B. The Righteousness of Jesus Christ May Be Imputed to Individuals 2:29.
- 1) We need to know that He is righteous.

This is the condition of the third class - you may know this or you may not. God would have you know it, and you will know it if you humble yourself before Him and let His Holy Spirit nurture and develop you. Sadly, many professing Christians seem to place little emphasis on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This attitude is not only sinful, it is costly.

- 2) "Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him," (2:29).

You may know this, or you may not - but if you do know that He is righteous, you will also know that everyone who practices righteousness is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. The only righteousness that is acceptable to God the Father is the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is imputed to those who place their faith and trust in Him. God demands righteousness of everyone who would stand in His presence, but no one can produce it on his own. His highest attempt is as filthy rags; it is repugnant to God. Then, how do we receive righteousness if we cannot produce it? It is imputed by the grace of God unto all who place their faith in His Son.

There is one other thing that must be stressed here. We are not saved by practicing righteousness - by doing righteous deeds. The practice of righteousness is the proof of our salvation, not the grounds for it. We do not get to be saved by doing good works, but if we are in Christ, we should be practicing righteousness. But how can we practice righteousness if we cannot produce any? We practice the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is imputed unto us when we believe in Him. The righteousness we practice is not human righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, and that righteousness can only be produced in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION. If the Word of God "abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." If you abide in the Son and in the Father, the Holy Spirit will produce righteousness in and through you. Practicing righteousness is a matter of grace. The emphasis here is upon our being righteous. The practice of righteousness flows out of our relationship with Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace and we live by grace. The grace of God is the basis for all growth and maturity for every believer.

CHAPTER THREE

I. CHARACTER AND BLESSINGS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD, 3:1-10.

3:1 - LOOK AT HOW GREAT A LOVE. *“Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God’s children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn’t know Him.”* We are invited to look at how great a love the Father has given us. In the first place, we should look often at the love the Father has for us. Then, we should look at the capacity the Father has given us to love Him and to love one another.

CALLED GOD’S CHILDREN. All God’s children should pause often and meditate upon what it means to be called a child of God. Kant was awed by the realization that “God loves me.” Barclay proclaimed his greatest thought to be, “Jesus loves me.” Think what it means for the creature to be permitted to call his Creator, “Father.” John adds the Amen to that thought: “And we are!”

John explains that “The reason the world does not know us is that it didn’t know Him.” Make no mistake about it, the world does not know us - but it does not know that it does not know us. It is amazing to listen to “religious” discussions on the network news programs when something comes up to attract attention to Jesus or the church. When the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, was released, the big issue for many concerned whether or not it was anti-Semitic. Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore had a display of the Ten Commandments placed in the foyer of the court house and he was roundly condemned, both by the religious and the non-religious. The world does not understand our stand on the Bible, the Cross, Christian ethics, or Christian education. They do not understand our position on alcoholic beverages, especially when many Christians who oppose tobacco, still defend social drinking.

3:2 - WHEN HE APPEARS. *“Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is.”* John considers born again believers “dear friends,” and “God’s children.” Addressing these “dear friends,” he adds that when Jesus appears, “we will be like Him.” Note that he does not say, “if” He comes. John is absolutely convinced that Jesus is returning for His church and that all believers will eventually be as He is. The amazing thing is that John has not yet received the Revelation. But he had seen the risen Lord and he was there when He Ascended and when His angel promised that He would return in like manner as He had Ascended, meaning visibly.

3:3 - THIS HOPE. *“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure.”*

Elsewhere, I mentioned my Jewish friend who said, “I wish I could believe in heaven.” What he does not understand is that with his strong anti-Jesus heart, he could believe all he wants to, but he will never see haven until he repents and believes in the One he hates.

NOTE: As noted elsewhere, this friend died without the Lord Jesus Christ. He died a bitter enemy of Jesus. Now he knows. But it is too late.

The Sermon Notebook - 3:1-3

INTRODUCTION. In Christ, you can have your cake and eat it too! There, I have said it: You can have your cake and eat it too. If you live to be one hundred, and feast on the Bread of Life every day, you will never make a dent in the supply. You can drink of the Water of Life every day, and never lower the level. While you cannot eat and physical cake and keep it, you can go daily to the Lord's table and take all you desire without diminishing in the slightest that which is stored up for you in Heaven.

It was martyred missionary Jim Elliot who, among other comments that showed wisdom beyond his years, made the often quoted statement: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot also declared, "Be sure when it comes time to die, all you have to do is die." You know, I believe if Jim Elliot could speak to us from Heaven right now, he would tell us that you can have your cake and eat it, too. You can enjoy all the benefits of a relationship with our Heavenly Father right here and right now, without losing even the most minuscule blessing awaiting us in glory. Now, let's see if our text today does not affirm the fact that we do not have to wait until we die before we can have a meaningful relationship with our Lord.

I. BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED ON US, 3:1.

A. He Proves His Love By Calling Us Children of God.

- 1) The Bible does not say that all people are God's children.
 - a. That is what the devil says.
 - b. Sadly, that is what a lot of people believe.
 - c. If you believe that you are either lost or a deceived Christian.
 - d. A new Christian may be deceived if he is not disciplined.
 - e. No mature Christian should be deceived about this.
- 2) The Bible tells us that God loves the World (John 3:16).
- 3) It teaches that only born-again believers are children of God.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).
- 4) All who believe in Jesus Christ receive eternal life.
- 5) You do not have to wait until you die to receive eternal life.

Andrew Murray said that death is not a change of direction, it is another step in the way the Spirit-filled Christian has been going all along. You can have your cake and eat it, too. Jesus said, "*And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand*" (John 10:28)."

B. The World Cannot Comprehend the Christian Life.

1) The world does not know Jesus Christ.

- a. The world knows someone named Jesus lived two thousand years ago.
- b. The world does not know Jesus Christ in a redemptive sense.

Perhaps I can explain this if you will look with me at Isaiah 1:2-3: "*Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, 'Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. An **ox knows its owner**, And a donkey its master's manger, **But Israel does not know**, My people do not understand.*"

When Isaiah writes, "The ox knows its owner," he uses a word which means to recognize. When he writes that "Israel does not know," that word means to know by experience. There are a lot of people who recognize the name Jesus, who do not know Him personally, experientially, intimately.

2) The world does not know us.

- a. The world knows there are people called Christians.
- b. Many lost people think they are Christians.
- c. The world does not know how one comes to be a Christian.
- d. It does not understand why Christians live the way they do.
- e. Sadly, the world is confused by some people who profess to be Christians.

A visitor left a church after one of the "faithful" members prayed. His mother, thinking he was ill, followed him out and asked what was wrong. He explained that he had seen that man the night before at some club where he was checking something in his line of work. He told her the man had been drunk, "and the woman he was with was not his wife." Yet the man had prayed a very emotional prayer.

I listened to a man give his testimony about how the Lord had saved him from almost certain death when his boat capsized and he was about to be drawn under a larger vessel. A friend of his later told me that the same man might pray a moving prayer during a worship service and then be using obscene language before he got beyond the front steps.

II. CHILDREN OF GOD LIVE WITH A BLESSED HOPE, 3:2-3.

A. By the Grace of God, We Are the Children of God.

1) We are children of God because we have been born again.

When I was growing up we went to Vacation Bible School the second week in August each year. It was the hottest part of the year, but it was lay-by time in cotton country, that time between the last hoeing and the first picking. Farmers could permit their children to attend VBS each afternoon for three hours, then we would all go back for revival services each evening the same week. The opening assembly included pledges to the American flag, the Christian flag, and the Bible. The pledge to the Bible remains the same, but the other two have been changed. The pledge to the American flag was changed to include the now famous words, "under God." The pledge to the Christian flag was changed at one point. Formerly, it read, "uniting all mankind in service and love." It now reads, "uniting all Christians in service and love." There is an important distinction here and we must not miss it. We are not all children of God. Only believers are.

2) We are children of God by adoption.

"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:5-6).

3) We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7).

B. We Do Not Yet have Perfect Knowledge of Our Eternal Form or Existence.

1) What we do know is that "when He is revealed, we shall be like Him."

- a. "When He is revealed" holds before us His glorious return.
- b. We are not given the date, but we do know many of the circumstances.
- c. We also know that we will be like Him forever.

This is great! The Holy Spirit is actively trying to conform us to the image of Christ here and now (Rom. 8:29). That is Sanctification. And we will be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ in Heaven. That is Glorification. This is exciting! Ask me if I know where Heaven is. Yes, it is where Jesus is. Ask me if I know what I will be like in Heaven. Absolutely! I am going to be like Jesus.

2) When He is revealed, "we shall see Him as He is."

When Jesus Christ comes again, He will not be returning as the Suffering Servant, but as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will not come again to be mocked, slapped, flogged, and crucified; but to make all enemies His footstool. Those who walked with Him in the Holy Land two thousand years ago saw Him as He was then, but people did not follow Him because of His physical appearance:

"For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (Is. 53:2).

They who followed Jesus on earth saw His holiness, His compassion, His wisdom, and a measure of His power. When He returns He will be revealed in absolutely holiness and power.

C. EVERYONE WHO HAS THIS HOPE IN HIM PURIFIES HIMSELF, 3:3.

- 1) "Everyone" here means all born-again believers in Jesus Christ.
 - a. Postmodern men and women must hear this message.
 - b. All people are not going to Heaven.
 - c. In fact, most people are not going to Heaven.
- 2) "This hope" refers to those who will be like Jesus throughout eternity.
 - a. Hope in the New Testament is not wishful thinking.
 - b. Biblical hope denotes assurance.
- 3) Everyone who has "this hope in Him purifies himself."
 - a. In the first place, you cannot purify yourself.
 - b. Only the Holy Spirit can purify you.
 - c. He will purify you only if you desire it.
 - d. He will not purify you if you do not desire it.
 - e. He will purify you, but not without your participation.

CONCLUSION. God wants you to be pure, just as Jesus is pure. If you remain focused on Jesus Christ, as He is revealed through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will conform you to the image of Christ here and now - and you will for all eternity be with Him, and you will be like Him. This is the absolutely hope of every believer.

NOTE: The Believer's Study Bible notes that: "In this section, the author focuses on three signs of authentic Christianity: righteousness (3:4-10a), love (3:10b-18), and orthodox doctrine (4:1-6). These elements are sometimes called the moral test, the social test, and the doctrinal test, respectively. The failure of the false teachers in each of these areas indicates their true spiritual condition" [BSB]. The Character of the children of God and the children of Satan are contrasted in 3:4-10. Again, the Believers Study Bible comes to our aid:

3:4-10. As the author presents the moral test, he considers **three major issues**:

- (1) The people involved in sin—they do "lawlessness" (v. 4) and are "of the devil" (v. 8);
- (2) The work of Christ—He came to take away sin (v. 5) and destroy the work of the devil (v. 8);
- (3) The differing responses to sin—those who sin do not know Him (v. 6); they are children of the devil (v. 10). By contrast, those who abide in Him do not

sin (v. 6); they are children of God (v. 10) [BSB].

3:4 - COMMITS SIN. *“Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law.”* The present active participle (*poiôn*) denotes the habit of doing sin. “Lawlessness is used here in its broadest sense—defection from any of God’s standards” [RSB]. Everyone who commits sin is a lawbreaker, which is the definition of sin given here. Paul was inspired to write that “All have sinned (past tense) and come (present tense) short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). There has never been but one exception to that and that was Jesus, who was “tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin.” Not only have all people committed sins in the past, even believers commit acts of sin today. There is a difference in the sinner “saved by the grace of God” and the lost sinner. The lost person is a slave to sin and sins without the same conviction the Holy Spirit brings to bear on the believer.

3:5 - TAKE SIN AWAY. *“You know that He was revealed so that He might take away sins, and there is no sin in Him.”* He “was revealed” refers to the Incarnation. Jesus came to provide for the forgiveness of sin, as John 3:16 clearly teaches. John the Baptist was fulfilling his role when he saw Jesus and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

3: 6 - REMAINS IN HIM. *“Everyone who remains in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.”* Anyone who continues in sin is not of God. The child of God does not habitually sin. On the surface this is a difficult passage. John has already said that the person who says he has not sinned is a liar (1:8). Here, he declares that the child of God does not sin. To understand what he means we must examine the verb tenses used.

- (1) 1:8 - Present tense - If we say that we have (at this present moment) no sin (one even one sin) we are liars.
- (2) 1:10 - Perfect tense - If we say we have never sinned at any time we make Him a liar.
- (3) 2:1 - Aorist tense - If anyone does sin (snap shot action - one time action).
- (4) 3:6 - Present tense - *“Everyone who remains in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.”* (in the Greek the present tense denotes continuous or habitual action). A Christian will commit acts of sin but he will not continually or habitually sin. He will not habitually live in rebellion against God. He cannot both abide in sin and abide in God.

What this means is that “The lifestyle of the believer who keeps God’s commands (abides) will be obedience, not sin. The lifestyle of the one who keeps on sinning demonstrates that he does not know God” [RSB].

The present tense, in this context, indicates the breaking of the perpetual hold of sin in the life of the disciple. Thus the verse can be understood to mean, “Whoever

abides in Him does not continually and habitually sin.” The power to overcome habitual sin is based on the invulnerability of the believer to the ravages of satanic influence (5:18), and on “His seed” remaining in him (v. 9). The expression “His seed” is a reference to the divine principle of life that abides in a man after regeneration in Christ. This principle prevents slavery to Satan and sin [BSB].

3:7 - RIGHTEOUS. *“Little children, let no one deceive you! The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous.”* Believers are admonished to let no one keep deceiving them, as the Gnostic philosophers were trying to do (see 1John 1:8; 2:26). The one who keeps on doing what is right is righteous. When one believes in Jesus, His righteousness is imputed unto him. When Christ reigns in one’s heart that person habitually produces righteousness. That is what “Christ in you really means. He produces righteousness in you.

3:8 - THE DEVIL. *“The one who commits sin is of the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil’s works.”* The one who habitually commits sin is “of the devil” or a child of the devil, whom Jesus called a murderer and a liar from the very beginning (John 8).

Immediately after the Fall, God addressed the devil, “I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). That is exactly what happened on the cross. In spite of all his efforts to have Jesus destroyed, the most he could do was to bruise His heel. But on the cross, Jesus delivered the death blow to the devil. He crushed the head of the serpent, but as a serpent can writhe and strike out at anyone in reach, Satan is still writhing and striking out today.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:4-8

INTRODUCTION. There are those who claim that the Bible contradicts itself. Is that true, and if it is, can I trust it? There is a simple answer: There are many contradictions in the Bible, but at no place does it contradict itself, or the divine Author of every verse. What the Bible contradicts that disturbs so many people is itself, but the way they live. Various accounts of events in the Bible do not contradict each other, they compliment each other.

Lost people would like to reject the Word of God because it identifies them as sinners, under sentence of eternal death. It also stands in shocking contrast to their worldview. What does that have to do with the First Epistle of John, the epistle written to provide us with assurance of our relationship with Jesus Christ? There seem, on the surface, to be a major contradiction in this little epistle. However, I am convinced that there is absolutely no contradiction from one passage to another. But there might be a contradiction between the God-breathed Word and some unfortunate and unscriptural conceptions held by some people.

I. JESUS CHRIST CAME TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS, 3:4-5.

A. Whoever Commits Sin Also Commits Lawlessness, and Sin Is Lawlessness, 3:4.

- 1) The Bible teaches that all people sin.
 - a. "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).
 - b. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
 - c. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).
- 2) "The wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23).
- 3) Every lost person is under a penalty of eternal death (John 3:18).
- 4) Sin is lawlessness, and lawlessness is rebellion against the law of God.
- 5) Now, let us look at the "whoever" part of this, which John has already addressed.
 - a. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, 1 John 1:8.
 - b. If we say we have no sin, we call God a liar, 1 John 1:10.
 - c. Here, as in the hymn, "Whosoever Surely Meaneth me."

B. Jesus "Was Manifested to Take Away Our Sins," 3:5a.

- 1) He was revealed by the Father.
- 2) He was affirmed by the Holy Spirit.
- 3) He was proclaimed by miracles.
- 4) He was substantiated by the Resurrection.

C. In Him There Is no Sin, 3:5b.

- 1) Jesus knew no sin. *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21).
- 2) He was without sin, Hebrews 4:15.

II. HE WHO REMAINS IN CHRIST DOES NOT SIN, 3:6.

A. There Is no Contradiction in the Scripture.

We are not going to gloss over what may seem to some to be a contradiction here. It is a fact that in 1:8, John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is also a fact that he says in 1:10 that, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." And now, he is saying that "He who abides in Christ does not sin." Is he not saying here right the op-

posite of what he has said in chapter one? Absolutely not. Let me explain.

In 1:8 and 10, John is dealing with the principle of sin that remains active in the heart even after one has received a judicial pardon for his sins. Justification is a metaphor of the court room. When you believe in Jesus Christ, God, the eternal and omniscient Judge, pronounces you just. When you sin from that time forward - and you will sin ("come short of the glory of God," Rom. 3:23b) - we "have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (2:1b). When the lost person sins, he is in rebellion against the law of God and God will deal with him as his Judge. When the Christian sins, God will deal with him as Father, as a father dealing with a child.

Chapter one teaches that even after we are saved, there is a sin principle (some call it the old sin nature) which remains in operation until we are glorified. Because of the sinful nature, the believer will commit acts of sin, and at times those acts may be shocking, not only to others, but also to the individual who commits them. Paul, in the section of Romans dealing with Sanctification, shares his personal testimony with us:

"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Rom. 7:19-22).

Christians do, and will continue to commit acts of sin. There is never a day that we do not need to confess our sins and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). Now, John is going to make a statement that may seem to contradict 1:8 and 1:10, but in fact, there is no contradiction at all.

B. "Whoever abides in Him does not sin," 3:6.

"Well," one may say, "that certainly sounds like a contradiction! Just read 1:8-10; 2:1-21; and 3:9 and see if you do not see a problem." Let us begin by admitting that this is not easy for one who is reading this in the English. However, in this text the key that unlocks the mystery to the truth is in the meaning of the Greek tenses.

This verse does not claim that Christians will never commit any acts of sin (which would contradict 1:8). The verb here denotes continuous action. This passage does not teach that a Christian never sins at all after his conversion. Those who claim that they can reach sinless perfection in this life cannot point to this verse as a proof text. The note in the Believer's Study Bible states, "The present tense, in this context, indicates the breaking of the perpetual hold of sin in the life of the disciple."

C. Whoever Abides in Him Does not Continually and Habitually Sin.

In Justification, we are delivered from the eternal penalty of sin. In Sanctification, we are being delivered from the power of sin. In Glorification, we will be delivered from the very presence of sin - for ever! The lost person, because he is a slave to sin and Satan, is presently under a sentence of death (John 3:18). His only hope is in receiving Jesus Christ by grace through faith. The Christian is one who has been born again, and is being nurtured and developed by the Holy Spirit. As you are being conformed to the image of Christ, there are many sins that should no longer be a problem for

you. That does not mean that we do not sin, for we do (1 John 1:8). We must confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness (1:9).

There is no contradiction here. What John is saying here is that the born again believer in Jesus Christ will not continue in sin so as to make it his lifestyle. He will not sin habitually. That does not mean that we have some magic formula we can use to determine whether or not our neighbor is really a born again believer. The Believer's Study Bible Notes may help us:

"The power to overcome habitual sin is based on the invulnerability of the believer to the ravages of satanic influence (5:18), and on "His seed" remaining in him (v. 9). The expression "His seed" is a reference to the divine principle of life that abides in a man after regeneration in Christ. This principle prevents slavery to Satan and sin."

D. "Whoever Sins Has Neither Seen Him nor Known Him."

The person who continually sins so as to make it his lifestyle demonstrates that he has never known Jesus. Sadly, some have taught that one sin will condemn the believer to hell. A friend told me of the sermon he heard in his youth that troubled him for years. An evangelist stated a hypothetical situation in which the pastor of his church might be called on to visit a dying church member. He went on to say that if his buggy wheel hit a stump and he was thrown out of the buggy and hit his head on another stump and was killed, the pastor would spend his eternity in hell if he uttered a profane word before his head hit the stump.

This is not what John is teaching. He says that when a person continues in sin, that is, sins habitually, he is demonstrating that he has never known Jesus Christ. He has no saving relationship with Him. You either abide in Christ or you abide in sin. Now, I would suggest that before we apply that to all the other members of our church, we apply it to ourselves first. If I can continue in sin, I must ask myself if I really know Jesus Christ.

III. HE WHO PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS, 3:7-8.

A. The Warning Implies the Danger That Some Might Be Deceived, 3:7a.

- 1) Paul amplifies the warning in Galatians 6:7-8.
- 2) Some are deceived as to what makes one a Christian.

In a recent edition of *The O'Rielly Factor*, Bill O'Rielly interviewed a man he introduced as a former Muslim leader in America who had converted to Christianity. Asked to explain what had happened, the young black man stated that he had been "born a Christian," and then he had converted to Islam, and now he had returned to Christianity - and was entering politics. One may be born a Jew, or he may be born a Muslim, but no one is ever born a Christian. One can only become a Christian by being re-born, or born-again, by grace through faith.

B. Now, Let Us Look at the Biblical View of Righteousness, 3:7b..

- 1) God demands righteousness of all who would come into His presence.
- 2) No one is righteous (Rom. 3:10ff).
- 3) Our highest attempt at righteousness is as filthy rags (Is. 64:6).
- 4) The righteousness of God is imputed unto those who believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3).
- 5) The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

C. Those Who Live By Faith Practice Righteousness.

Herein is true spirituality: "He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." The key to Sanctification is found in Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..." In other words, God has predestined all who are justified to be so conformed to the image of Jesus Christ that he will practice the righteousness of Christ. While man's highest attempt at righteousness is as filthy rags, once the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto him he will be righteous, "just as He is righteous."

D. This Is the Key to Spirituality.

- 1) The spiritual person is a believer who abides in Christ.
- 2) The truly spiritual person is Christ-like.
- 3) He practices righteousness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

E. There Are Some Specific Results of Spirituality.

- (1) The spiritual person glorifies Christ.
- (2) The spiritual person has a perception of the Word that lost people lack.
- (3) The spiritual person has the power to witness for Christ.
- (4) The spiritual person has divine guidance through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- (5) The spiritual person has assurance of salvation and God's presence.
- (6) The spiritual person may worship His Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.
- (7) The spiritual person can pray to the Father.
- (8) The spiritual person ministers to others.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

Volumes have been written in recent years on the Spirit-filled life. The Scripture is very clear on the subject: the Spirit-filled person is a Christ-like person. Is there anything in the world you desire more than you desire to be like Christ? If there is, you are carnal, not spiritual. If you are spiritual, your life will manifest it. People may be paying a lot more attention to your life than you think.

MY LIFE

My life is an open book,
Open wide for all may see.

Each day it must be a little better,
For someone may follow me.

My life is an open book,
Open wide that you may know,
With but one quick look,
What kind of seed I sow.

The print is large, the type is bold,
And easy for you to see.
So, when my life you behold
I ask your prayer before you judge me.

---- Johnny L. Sanders

F. He Who Continues in Sin Is of the Devil, 3:8a.

- 1) The devil has sinned from the beginning.
- 2) If you continue in sin you are of the devil, no matter how loudly you profess faith in God.

G. Jesus Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil. 3:8b.

CONCLUSION. We need to understand this within the context of this epistle. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and He came to destroy Satan and everything that is of the devil. While He delivered the death blow to Satan at Calvary, Satan is still active on planet earth today. However, when Jesus Christ returns, he will ultimately destroy Satan (Rev. 20:10). While this true, I thank God that we do not have to wait for the return of our Lord in order to see Jesus Christ destroy the work of Satan.

Jesus is destroying the work of the devil in the hearts of believes every day. When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus won a mighty victory over the devil. Through the ministry of His Spirit and His Word He equips you for warfare against the devil. In other words, He is defeating the works of the devil in your heart daily as you abide in him. And as you continue to abide in Him you continue to practice the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is what He wants to do for you, and through you right now. The question is, are you ready to let Him do it?

Let me share with you a poem I copied - as I recall - from a wall in the main lobby of camp 4 at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman some 40 years ago:

NO TIME FOR GOD

You've time to build houses and in them dwell,
And time to do business - to buy and to sell,
But none for repentance, for deep earnest prayer,
To seek your salvation you've no time to spare.

You've time for earth's pleasures, for frolic and fun,

For her glittering treasures how quickly you run,
But care not to seek the fair mansions above,
The favor of God, or the gift of His love.

You've time to take voyages over the deep sea,
And take in the gay world's jubilee;
But soon our hopes will be lost in the gloom
Of the cold, dark river of death and the tomb.

You've time to resort to woods, mountains, and glen,
And time to gain knowledge from the books of men,
Yet no time to search for the wisdom of God;
but what of your soul when you are under the sod?

For time will not linger when helpless you lie;
Staring death in the face, you will take time to die!
Then, what of the judgment? Paul, think, I implore!
For time will be lost on eternity's shore.

1 John 3:9-10

3:9 - DOES NOT SIN. *“Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because His seed remains in him; he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God.”* This is an amazing statement, and to some it must seem unbelievable. Yet, it says very clearly that every individual who has been born of God does not sin. In the English it seems contradictory, but it is not at all. “God’s seed (*sperma*, Gk.) represents the new life which results from spiritual regeneration. This life is vitalized by the Spirit and removes an individual from the dominion of Satan” [BSB]. Robertson explains the original construction:

And he cannot sin (*kai ou dunatai hamartanein*). This is a wrong translation, for this English naturally means "and he cannot commit sin" as if it were *kai ou dunatai hamartein* or *hamartêsai* (second aorist or first aorist active infinitive). **The present active infinitive *hamartanein* can only mean "and he cannot go on sinning,"** as is true of *hamartanei* in verse 1Jn 3:8 and *hamartanôn* in verse 1Jn 3:6 [ATR, emphasis added].

3:10 - MADE EVIDENT. *“This is how God’s children—and the Devil’s children—are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother.”* Our spiritual heritage is manifested by our actions. A roommate at Mississippi College told me about a girl he had observed in class or chapel. He mentioned her radiant smile. That he may have had a crush on her I will not debate, but there was something about her smile that made a statement. The first time I met Babs, I understood what had so impressed my roommate. There really was something about her that distinguished her from most other students, even on a Christian campus.

One day she told me about a twelve year old girl who called her at home and said, "I have been watching you and you have something I don't have. Will you tell me how to be saved?" Babs had the privilege of leading the young girl to faith in Jesus Christ. In this case a child of God was "made evident" by the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ. It would be wonderful if every member of every church had a testimony like that.

DOES NOT DO WHAT IS RIGHT. Once again, this denotes the habit of not doing what is right, a condition that clearly identifies one as not being of God. The children of the devil are made evident by their unrighteousness, just as the children of God are made evident by righteousness.

The Sermon Notebook - 3:9-10

INTRODUCTION. The budding Gnosticism of John's day had influenced many people who were coming into the church. The primary concern with which John and others had to deal was the person of Jesus Christ. Some of those who were coming into the church refused to leave all their old pagan beliefs behind. They taught that spirit is good and matter is evil. Therefore, they claimed, Jesus could not have become flesh and blood without becoming contaminated by that which is material. They came up with various theories to explain Jesus, including the theory that He just seemed to be human. Another view held that he was spirit until baptism, at which time he became spirit. According to this theory, he became flesh and blood again before the crucifixion - spirit could not die. John had an answer for that heresy in the Fourth Gospel, which had been written a few years earlier: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

There were others who professed faith in Jesus Christ in John's day who taught that once you are saved, the spirit is redeemed and nothing the body did could effect the spirit. These heretics flaunted their sinful, lifestyle as if their indulgence in sin proved that their spirit was totally insulated from the sins committed in, or by the body. God had an answer to those false claims in John's day, just as He has an answer to the ungodly claim of postmodern America:

"It may be a sin for you, but that does not mean that it is a sin for me."

"Who are you to call me a sinner? I am not a sinner."

"I may have done something stupid, but that does not mean it is a sin."

Let's see how John deals with the subject of sin in the life of the believer.

I. WHOEVER HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN, 3:9.

A. This May be a Shocking Claim to Many People.

1) Jeremiah wrote that the heart is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:8).

2) Paul wrote that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

- a. "All have sinned" is in the past tense.
- b. "Come short" is in the present tense.

3) John says that if we say he have no sin we make God a liar, 1:8, 10.

4) This seems to stand in sharp contrast to the statement made in 2:10. The Gnostics either denied sin, or insisted that sin did not effect them. We have already seen in the first chapter of this epistle that anyone who denies that there is a sin principle that is alive and active in the heart of believers is ignorant of the truth. Because of the sin principle - the sinful nature - people will commit acts of sin, obviously some more than others. If you say that you never commit any sins at all you are a liar, and you are making God out to be a liar.

What we need to do every day is to confess the sins of which we are convicted, and God will "forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9). Sin grieves the Holy Spirit, blocks prayer, and hinders our comprehension of Scripture. Obviously, sin is serious.

Then, how can John, after all that, turn around and state here that "Whoever has been born of God does not sin"? And there is no getting around it; that is exactly what he is saying. First, he says that if we say we have not sin we are a liar; and then he says that if we are Christians we "cannot sin." If there was ever a contradiction, this sounds like one.

Actually, there is no contradiction at all, and the sooner we understand what he is saying the sooner we will understand the doctrine of sin and sanctification - and the sooner we will be blessed with greater victories in our walk with the Lord..

B. The Believer Does Not Habitually Sin (see also, 2:6-8).

- 1) The believer has a sinful nature.
- 2) The believer will commit acts of sin.
- 3) The born again believer will not habitually sin so as to make it his lifestyle.
- 4) You cannot live in Christ and live in sin at the same time.

C. The Reason We Cannot Practice Sin Is That His Seed Remains in Us.

- 1) This applies only to those who are born of God.
- 2) Habitual actions indicate one's character.
- 3) You cannot habitually practice sin and habitually practice righteousness.
- 4) His "seed" denote the divine nature He gives us when we are born again.

This is the result of spiritual regeneration. "This life is vitalized by the Spirit and removes an individual from the dominion of Satan" (BSB). This nature prevents the Christian from habitually sinning. In the Fourth Gospel, John writes of those who are born, "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

5) This testifies to the supernatural nature of the new life in Christ.

- a. This cannot be said of one who just knows about God.
- b. This cannot be said of every church member.
- c. This cannot be said of everyone who has been baptized
- d. This cannot be said of one who subscribes to a system of ethics.
- e. This cannot be said of one who embraces New Age religions.
- f. This is true only of those who are born of God.

6) We cannot habitually sin because His seed "remains" us.

- a. "Remains" implies permanent residence.
- b. Paul writes of those who are "in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (Phil. 1:1).

7) One who is born of God "cannot sin."

One who "remains" (abides) in Christ cannot remain habitually in sin. This does not say that the believer should not sin - though he shouldn't. In 2:1, John tells he is writing this that we sin not. It is God's desire that we do not sin. It is also His desire that when we do commit acts of sin, we confess those sins and receive His forgiveness. However, that is not what this verse is saying. This verse says that the Christian cannot sin. This is the Word of God - God's inspired, infallible, inerrant Word. It is also consistent with everything else we read in this epistle. The sin principle, or the sin nature, is still operating in the believer's heart, and he will commit acts of sin, but he cannot habitually sin if he has taken up residence in Christ Jesus.

II. YOU ARE EITHER THE CHILD OF GOD OR THE CHILD OF THE DEVIL, 3:10.

A. The Children of God Practice Righteousness.

1) This does not say you get to be children of God by doing good things.

- a. "The righteous man shall live by faith," (Rom. 1:17.
- b. No one is justified by good works (Eph. 2:9; Gal. 2:16).

2) What it says is that children of God practice righteousness.

- a. We practice righteousness because of our new nature in Christ.
- b. "In Christ" are the operative words.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

c. The highest attempt of the lost person is as filthy rags.

C. Let Me Stress This One Thing: Christianity Is Not Morality.

- 1) Morality is better than immorality.
- 2) Morality cannot produce Christianity.
- 3) Christianity will manifest morality.

D. Now Look With Me at Some Principles of Morality.

- 1) Christianity is much more than a system of ethics.
 - a. Religion has to do with people seeking God.
 - b. Christianity is about God seeking people.
- 2) The Christian is moral because he is "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - a. Morality is a product of a relationship with a Holy God.
 - b. Christianity is a higher morality than the world can produce.

There are people who like to bring up the Code of Hammurabi when any system of ethics is mentioned. This is especially so when the Mosaic Law is the subject. If you will excuse the technical theological term, they like to make the stupid claim that Moses drew from the Code of Hammurabi, with the hint that he may have plagiarized it. These claims are made by people who have a problem accepting the authority of the Word of God.

The Mosaic Law, and for that matter the entire Pentateuch, is based on a foundation that predates the Code of Hammurabi by centuries. When Noah stepped off the Ark with Mrs. Noah and their three sons and daughters-in-law, they did so with a thorough understanding of the laws and standards of God; and Noah's sons taught them to their sons, who in turn taught them to their sons. This continued until the time of Hammurabi, who wrote down a code of laws and ethics which manifested a devolution from the clear and certain laws Noah taught his sons, yet an impressive one to the world. The Mosaic Law is superior to the Code of Hammurabi because its Author is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, the Lord God of heaven and earth.

As impressive as the Mosaic Law is, it needed to be fulfilled and perfected. That is exactly what Jesus did. There is nothing in all the history of the world like the Sermon on the Mount. How long has it been since you made a thorough study of the Sermon on the Mount?

- 3) Morality has no spiritual dynamic.
 - a. Human good is better than human evil.
 - b. Society benefits from human good.
 - c. Morality will never produce the power promised in Acts 1:8.

- d. Morality cannot produce Justification.
 - e. Morality cannot produce Sanctification.
- 4) The filling by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) produces a spiritual dynamic.
 - 5) Morality is absolutely necessary.
 - a. It is necessary for the preservation of the human race.
 - b. It is necessary for the orderly function of the human race.
 - 6) Morality, though essential to an orderly society, cannot produce salvation.
 - a. Morality cannot produce spirituality.
 - b. Morality without spirituality can produce legalism (see Galatians).
 - c. Salvation is by grace through faith, not works or a combination of grace and works.
 - d. Sanctification is by grace through faith, not of works.

E. The Children of the Devil Practice Sin.

- 1) All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).
- 2) The habitual practice of sin identifies one as a child of the devil.

F. The Children of God are Contrasted With the Children of the Devil.

1. The children of the devil do not practice righteousness.
2. The children of the devil do not love one another.
3. The children of God love Him and loathe sin.

CONCLUSION. You are either a child of God, or you are a child of the devil. And guess what? God does not keep you guessing! You can know to whom you belong. If you practice righteousness - if you are committed to righteousness - you are a child of God. If not, you are a child of the devil. That does not mean that if you subscribe to a high ethical code you are a child of God. What it means is that if you "remain" (or "abide") in Jesus Christ you cannot "remain" in sin; that is, you cannot continue practice of unrighteousness. If you are a child of God you practice righteousness, not in order to maintain a relationship with Him, but because you have received a new nature from Him.

II. THERE IS A SPIRITUAL TEST (LOVE), 1 John 3:11-18.

3:11 - LOVE ONE ANOTHER. *"For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another."* Second only to the command to love God is the command to love one another. This is a command directly from Jesus Himself, not the conclusion of a theologian, the ruminations of a philosopher, or the sermons of a preacher.

FROM THE BEGINNING. We see these words in John 1:1: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life.” John uses them again in 1 John 2:7. This is not only the Second Greatest Commandment, it was the second commandment given - from the beginning.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER. In the Books of the Law, God’s faithful love is held before us. In addition, we are commanded to love the Lord: “If you carefully obey My commands I am giving you today, to love the Lord your God and worship Him with all your heart and all your soul,” (Deut 11:13). Repeatedly in Deuteronomy we are commanded to love God and obey Him. That theme is repeated, love Him and obey Him. Jesus summarized the Law in two commandments: the first is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; the second is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. John here is restating the Second Great Commandment.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:11-15

INTRODUCTION. Repetition in a series of messages from First John is unavoidable, if for no other reason than the repetition in the epistle, especially when it comes to the subject of love. Because of the importance of defining the kind of love God commands of His people, we will take another look at the various kinds of love. We will then go on to look at some of the principles involved in the love which God commands.

When I was very young, I would hear testimonies by people who claimed to love the Lord with all their heart and to love everyone they knew. I was a little confused, because I did not have the same feelings for the drunk who stole his son’s spare tire and sold it to buy moonshine. How can I love someone I don’t even like?!!! Okay, I have finally said it. Well, my mother sort of gave me a way out - “You don’t have to like their ways to love the person.” I could have used that but lets face it, it is not always easy to separate the man from his ways. I wanted to show the kind of love God commands toward people who are “friendship challenged.” Is that possible?

Well, while I prayed about it, I did not actually worry about it. I just put it on the back burner and decided that I would look into it more later. And I did. And, furthermore, I think a few other people have benefited from what the Lord has revealed to us through His Word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are going to look at God’s command to love one another and I am convinced that a right understanding the kind of love God commands may not only help someone deal with any guilt this subject brings to mind, it will also bring a fresh joy to your heart.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE COMMANDED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER, 3:11.

A. This Was Commanded in the Law.

- 1) God promised loving kindness to those who love Him, Ex. 20:6.

2) God commanded Israel to love Him, Deut. 6:5. "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*"

B. Jesus Gave Us Two Great Commandments, Matthew 22:37-40.

1) He commands us to love God, Matthew 22:37-38. "*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*"

2) He commands us to love one another, Matthew 22:39. "*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*"

3) "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40).

4) Jesus even commands us to love our enemies, Matthew 5:43-44. "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*"

II NOW, LET US LOOK AT SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL LOVE.

A. There Are Four Types of Love Mentioned or Seen in the New Testament.

1) There is romantic love. Cannot be commanded.

2) There is familial love (love for family - which should be natural).

3) There is friendship love (*phileo*). This kind of love does not have to be commanded.

4) There is the love which God commands (*agapao* - *agape*). This love can be commanded.

B. Our Concern Here Will Be With Two of Those Words.

1) They are *agapao* and *phileo*.

I have often heard people say that *agape* is divine love, or Christian love. Well, we must remind ourselves that the Greeks were using the word a long time before there were any "Christians" around to use it. However, in the New Testament, this word is used to denote a very special kind of love.

Sadly, many people tend to under-define and oversimplify *agape*. While I was in seminary, and after I graduated I had the privilege of working with a very remarkable pastor, a man with deep insight into Scripture, a man who could recall the outline of a sermon he heard someone preach at a convention twenty years earlier. I had great respect for him and loved to hear him preach. I even wrote a paper on the preaching of this gifted man. However, when I asked him to preach in revival services many years later I was surprised by something he said about *agape*'. He stated that God expects us to love everyone; then he asked, "How can I love a person who is unlov-

able?" He answered the rhetorical question, "I cannot love him, but Christ, Who dwells in me can. I can let Christ in me love him."

At first thought this seemed to be the answer - and it is part of it. However, God does not command Christ to love everyone. He didn't have to; He already loves everyone. God commanded me to love others. I cannot avoid this fact. God commanded me to love others, and He did not tell me to choose certain people to love, or to love those who love me; those who might be useful to me, or those to whom I may be drawn for one reason or another.

I have to admit it - there are people I really look forward to seeing. And there are some people I really do not look forward to seeing. I don't enjoy being around an arrogant, obnoxious, vile person. But does God only intend for me to love other Christians as I love my self? Well, let me ask you this: Have you ever known a Christian who really turns you off? Do you have a warm feeling for every person you know who professes to be a Christian? Maybe you have had some guilt feelings over this. God has an answer for you.

2) *Agape* is a mental attitude type of love:

- a. Agape can be commanded because it is directed by the mind.
- b. Agape seeks the highest good for every person.
- c. Agape is not driven by emotions.
- d. Agape is directed by the mind - you know you should do it.
- e. Agape is released by the will - you will do it.
- f. Agape will then touch your emotions.

3) *Phileo* is "soulful" love:

- a. It involves the mind, the emotions, and the will.
- b. This is brotherly love.
- c. This kind of love cannot be commanded.
- d. It is often fed by mutual interests.
- e. It must be cultivated.
- f. This speaks of the wholesome intimacy of a friend who is closer than a brother.
- g. David and Jonathan had such a love for each other.
- h. This kind of love existed between Paul and Timothy.

4) These two kinds of love are not mutually exclusive.

- a. One might have *phileo* type love for others before becoming a Christian.
- b. Becoming a Christian places one under an obligation to *agape* others.
- c. We will develop a *phileo* type of love for some for whom they have *agape* kind of love.

Paul could claim the *agapao* kind of love for all people with whom he had come into contact, especially all believers. He loved Barnabas, Silas, Luke, and Titus with both *agape* love and *phileo* love. And then there was Timothy. When so many others either abandoned him or were simply not available to help him, there was always Timo-

thy. His relationship with Timothy began in *agape* love on the First Missionary Journey, and then when Timothy joined Paul and Silas on the Second Missionary Journey, a close personal relationship began to develop. Their *agape* love for each other never waned as their *phileo* love continued to grow.

When all the Church leaders in Asia abandoned Paul, there is no doubt that he was burdened for them because he still had *agape* love for them, even if they refused to respond to his love for them. There is no doubt that they did not have an intimate love for the man whom God had sent to them with the Gospel. They seemed to be deficient in both *agape* and *phileo* love for Paul. His concern about this shows *agape*, and implies *phileo*.

C. *Agape* Will Lead You Where *Phileo* May Not.

- a) It is *agape* that leads the Gideons to visit the state penitentiary.
- b) It is *agape* that leads some to risk their lives working with AIDS victims.
- c) It is *agape* that leads a missionary to a Muslim country where his family is at risk.
- d) It is *agape* that leads a believer to get involved with a family living in filth.
- e) It is *agape* that leads one back to the man who loathes the church.
- f) It is *agape* that leads one to work with a rebellious teenager.
- g) It is *agape* that leads one to bear with an obnoxious church member.
- h) It is *agape* that may open the door to a *phileo* love for some of those people.

D. Now, Let Us Look at Some Lessons on Love from the Bible.

- 1) God love us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
 - a. He loved you while you were a sinner.
 - b. He gave His Son to die for you.
- 2) "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- 3) God loves His Son with *agape* love (John 3:35).
- 4) The Father loves the Son with *phileo* love (John 5:20).
 - a. The Father loves the Son with an intimate love.
 - b. When God is doing the loving, *agape* is divine love.
 - c. When God is doing the loving, *phileo* is divine love.
- 5) *Agape* does not automatically denote divine love.
 - a. In John 3:16, God loves the world with *agape* love.
 - b. In John 3:19, evil men love evil with *agape* love.
- 6) *Agape* is divine love when God is doing the loving.
- 7) *Agape* is divine love when the child of God is loving others as God commands.

E. Now, Let Us See What This Means to Us.

- 1) You are commanded to *agape* one another.
- 2) You are not commanded to *phileo* one another.
 - a. Agape can be commanded because it is directed by the mind.
 - b. Phileo cannot be commanded because it is not directed by the mind exclusively.
 - c. Phileo does not need to be commanded.
- 3) When you were saved you were brought under God's maximum love.
- 4) When you were saved you were given the capacity for *agape* kind of love.
 - a. When you are "in Christ" you are placed under an obligation to love others.
 - b. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you are empowered to love others.
 - c. When you know the love of God you are motivated to love others.
- 5) The source of *agape* is the God who loves you.
 - a. You may nurture or cultivate both *agape* and *phileo*.
 - b. The love God commands has its source in Him.
- 6) If you love God, you are not grieved by His command to love others (1 John 5:3).
 - F. This Means That In Christ You Can Love People Who Are All But Unlovable.
 - a) God commands us to love others.
 - b) The love He commands is a mental attitude type of love.
 - c) Our motivation is His love for us, not just our love for Him.
 - d) We learn to see others as God sees them.
 - e) We seek the highest good for other people, regardless of their circumstances.
 - f) You really can love someone you do not like being around.
 - g) You can *agape* people you do not *phileo*.

Now, recall the directions given in the First Psalm: "How blessed is the man who (1) *does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor (2) stand in the path of sinners, Nor (3) sit in the seat of scoffers!*"

You can avoid wicked people, turn away from the path of sinners, and resist scoffers, and still have *agape* type love for them. You can love those from whom God commands you separate yourself.

With fear and trembling I will add that you can *agapao* people you don't even like - you may not *phileo* them, but you can *agapao* them. Again, I recall what my mother told me - I should not say that I didn't like someone - Christians should love everyone, but they do not always like their ways. The problem was that I really did not like arrogant, obnoxious people. I still don't! I am sorry about that, but it is not always easy to separate the person from his ways. Should I carry around a load of guilt because of this? If I do not have an *agape* type love for them, I must repent. If I do not

separate myself from drunks, slanderers, and immoral people I must also repent. If I do not pray for those same people, I must repent.

III. THE CONTRAST IS SEEN IN CAIN, 3:12-13.

A. Cain Showed the Very Antithesis of Love When He Killed His Brother, 3:12.

"Unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:12b).

B. Cain Hated Abel for Two Reasons.

- 1) His deeds were evil.
- 2) Abel's deeds were righteous.

C. Just As unrighteous Cain murdered righteous Abel, the Word hates Jesus Christ, 3:13.

- 1) The world really does hate Jesus Christ.
 - a. The NEA has provided lessons which portray Islam as good.
 - b. They have opposed anything that hints of Christ.
 - c. Their wall of separation applies only to Jesus.
- 2) The news media continually slants news against Jesus Christ.

A friend told me he sat on the stage with then Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton at a high school graduation. It was the third time they had been involved in a program together, so there was no way Clinton did not know that my friend was pastor of the First Baptist Church in that city - they had even talked about their churches. Then when the procession began the governor sat there and made obscene remarks about girls as they passed by to receive their diplomas.

My friend parroted the mantra spread by the news media, "Bill Clinton is brilliant, but..." Bill Clinton is not brilliant! He is shrewd and cunning, but he has been caught too many times for me to believe he is brilliant. How then did he keep getting away with it? One reason - the world's media covered up for him - and make no mistake about it, the secular media is not there to glorify Jesus Christ.

Repeatedly, the media has tried to portray President George Bush as slow, ignorant, or lacking "gravitas." Remember that word? Some in the media were incensed following an interview with a foreign head of state after his thirty minute meeting with President Bush. They had asked what they discussed and were told that President Bush had spent most of the time talking with him about Christ. The "Wall of Separation" had been violated!

History textbooks have been rewritten to delete the Christian influence on the Found-

ing Fathers. The Founders are dismissed as deists. But, if you will study the original documents you discover that most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were strong Christians. Why is the media and the NEA afraid for our children to know the truth? They will tell you that their main concern is "the children." Why do they lie to the children when it comes to Jesus Christ? The world to which they belong hates Christ. They throw Christians a bone on occasions just to divert the criticism. The world hates Jesus Christ, but it loves its own. That would explain why the righteous may suffer while the ungodly prosper in this world. In computer terminology, the world is "user friendly" to its own.

IV. LOVE FOR OTHER BELIEVERS PROVIDES ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION, 3:14.

A. We Can Know Right Now that We Have Passed From Death to Life.

- 1) In 2:3, we see we can have present knowledge of a permanent relationship with Christ.
- 2) Love for the brethren is a proof that we know the Lord.

B. The One Who Does Not Love the Brethren Is Spiritually Dead.

CONCLUSION. God will not keep you guessing. He wants you to know Him, and He wants you to that you know Him. Loving one another does not produce salvation, but a relationship with Jesus Christ manifests itself in love for other. It manifests itself in compassion for the lost and seeks their salvation. It also reaches out in fellowship and ministry to other believers. The love God commands is not only possible, it is realistic and practical. The more you practice it the more you will understand it and the more you will realize it.

3:12 - UNLIKE CAIN. *"Unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous."* Cain is held out as the antithesis of what is right: "Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another" (1 John 3:10-11). The law of love has been in effect since the first family walked on the earth and those who would do what is right will love one another. To do otherwise is to align oneself with Cain, the evil one who was sold out to the devil. We may make a distinction between the sacrifices offered by the brothers, but the first consideration must be given to what was in the heart of each. Abel loved God and sought to honor him. Cain was sold out to Satan and sought to serve himself.

Those who are evil will always hate those who are righteous. Most church members have not yet discovered the intense hatred many people hold for President George Bush. Some who are shocked by it do not understand how these people can wish they could have killed him in his cradle. The heart in which hate finds a home is an evil heart and we must never be surprised at what

Satan will place in the heart of those who are evil.

A number of times in recent years we have watched the news as a reporter explains that some vile, violent person had broken into someone's home and taken a small child from the home. As events unfold we learn that some sexual offender has managed to avoid the police in some way to put himself into a position to attack another child. The reporter tells us that the child is the daughter of Sarah Jones and her live-in boy friend. Then we learn that the sexual offender is out on the street because some judge refused to "throw the book at him" the last time he was convicted. My son is an ADA who had dealt with more cases like this than I can imagine and he tells me, "They will repeat."

Yet, these people seek opportunities to work with children because they "love children."

The parents of the hypothetical child profess to love one another. Why are they living together outside the bonds of marriage? If they really love one another why do they not demonstrate it by exchanging marriage vows. If they really love their child why do they not protect their child from the stigma of growing up in an environment that violates God's purpose for them and their child?

Take another hypothetical situation. Bill agrees to work for Jill (or Jill for Bill). Bill believes Jill is a friend he can trust. Then he gets an offer of a much better job and he goes in to tell Jill about his job, believing his friend will rejoice in the advantages the new job offers. Instead, Jill begins a crusade against Bill in which he is misrepresented to mutual friends. He learns that she has made the rounds condemning him to all who will listen. The interesting thing is that he has listened to her make sharp, critical remarks about those same people to him.

That is not the kind of love the Lord expects of His people. That is self-love. Self-love uses people. Self-love needs people who will affirm them in one way or another. Self-love confuses love with lust. Self-love may even serve others, or do favor for others, because it serves their purpose. Evil is like the proverbial frog in the kettle. It is subtle in nature, and it advances incrementally until it destroys both the subject and the object.

3:13 - THE WORLD HATES YOU. *"Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you."*

The world hates Jesus. To be more specific, the world hates the Christ of the Cross, the Christ of the New Testament. If it hates Jesus it will hate those who follow Him. Jesus, in one of the Beatitudes, said, "Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, insult you, and slander your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! Take note—your reward is great in heaven, because this is the way their ancestors used to treat the prophets" (Luke 6:22-23). At this time, September 19, 2006, the Muslim world is seething over a statement made by the current pope in which he quoted someone who many centuries ago expressed his opinion about Islam. They are demonstrating, shouting, and threatening to kill Christians around the world. One nun has already been murdered. If you tell them that Islam is not a religion of peace they will kill you! Not only are we hated by militant, evil religions, we are hated by secularists and organizations like the ACLU here in America.

3:14 - WE KNOW. *“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death.”* Here again, we are given way that we may know we “Have passed from death to life” - in other words, here is how we can know we are saved. The one who truly loves his or her brother or sister is of God. The one who does not love his brother is spiritually dead. Is it possible that many church members have never passed from death to life? Let’s face it, at the time some of our young people graduate from high school, some of the meanest people they have encountered have been church members. I have known adults who consistently attacked any young person who seemed to step forward and show leadership potential. I have especially seen that when someone began asking a teenager to sing solos on Sunday morning when some choir member decides that they are being overlooked for a teenager.

Do not expect the lost person who never comes to church to give himself this test. This is a test for the one believers and for those who profess to be believers.

3:15 - HATES HIS BROTHER. *“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.”* Jesus illustrated the progressive nature of this kind of evil and shows how it reveals the true nature of the heart one who harbors hatred:

“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, **everyone who is angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment. And **whoever says to his brother, ‘Fool!’** will be subject to the Sanhedrin. **But whoever says, ‘You moron!’** will be subject to hellfire (Matt 5:21-22).

3:16 - TO KNOW LOVE. *“This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.”* Jesus defined the love God expects each believer to have for others, the kind of love God enables the believer to practice. Jesus illustrates the love God places in the heart of His children when He came to earth to suffer and die for us. We “come to know love” when we come to know Jesus in a personal relationship. We come to know love when He lives in us. We come to know love when we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit Whom the Savior promised and the Father sent at Pentecost.

3:17 - BROTHER IN NEED. *“If anyone has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need but shuts off his compassion from him—how can God’s love reside in him?”* Having seen something of the nature and character of love, we should be prepared for the practical application of it. It is amazing that the world thinks of Christianity as another of the world’s religions. Christianity is not a religion! It is a relationship based upon God’s revelation of His redemptive love for us.

I recently received a phone call from a college student who has been called into the Lord’s service, with a strong impression that the call is to work with children. I had a flashback to the time

when that young person was a child walking down the aisle to profess Jesus Christ as Savior. Within a few minutes some noted a deacon walking by without speaking. Instead, he looked at her with seemed to be animosity. Some wondered if he was not counting votes for the other side in case a controversy arose. This is a test: Does the love of God reside in a person like that?

Harold was a young farmer who was trying to get established in the Mississippi Delta many years ago. He was a share-cropper on the farm of a Mr. Hill, man who owned one of the first tractors in he community. In time, Mr. Hill bought more equipment and then when Harold began renting farm land from him, he financed his operation, let him borrow a tractor, a disc, and other implements when he needed them. For years, Harold borrowed his neighbor's farm machinery. The day came when, even though he did not own any land, he rented enough to become a successful farmer. After he became established, he observed another borrowing a disc from Mr. Hill and made the comment, "I am not going to let anybody borrow my equipment and wear it out!" What kind of love is that?

Harold's wife met with ladies from the local church to discuss ways of helping a near destitute family in the community. Harold's wife opposed helping them in any way. When others pressed the issue she said, "I have seen their kids come into the store and buy candy bars." To which the wife of the pastor said, "If I were a child in that condition I would certainly be thankful if I could get my hands on a nickel and go to the store and buy a candy bar." When Harold's wife saw they ladies were going to take up a collection to buy food and clothes for the needy family, she volunteered to go buy the items and deliver them. What kind of love is that?

A young lady spreads gossip about a friend who is more popular. A young man makes a suggestive comment about a young lady who is supposed to be a friend in order to impress his buddy. What kind of love is that? Does the love of God reside in that kind of person.

I once made the statement that my mother was the most frustrating person I could imagine. Any time you came in with some really good gossip about a neighbor my mother would listen and then when you finished she would tell you how that person had done something very special for a friend or relative. She could always find something positive to say about anyone when someone else was trying to put them down. That is how I knew the love of God resided in my mother. That is how a lot of other people knew the love of God resided in her.

3:18 - DEED AND TRUTH. *"Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth."* Once again, John refers to the recipients as "little children", attesting to his now advanced age. There is an old saying, "talk is cheap." It is a lot easier to say, "I love my neighbor" than it is to prove it. Many believers are aware of people in their community who freely say, "let

me know if you need anything,” but when they are called on they may say, “Let me get back to you on that.” They are always busy or committed somewhere else. An uncle told me that after suffering a heart attack a neighbor said, “Don’t you try to climb that ladder to repair your roof. Call me and let me do it.” He was very insistent in offering to help. He made him promise to call him. When my uncle called his friend, the friend made him feel that he was imposing on a man who was too busy for such a project. My uncle said, “There is one thing for sure. I will never call on him for anything else.” When someone has a genuine need he does not need a speech. He needs a practical application of the love the believer professes.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:12-15

INTRODUCTION. In our last message in this series we took an in depth look at two specific kinds of love, *agapao* and *phileo*. We discovered that while we may possess both kinds of love for an individual, we may hold one kind of love for a person and then see that grow into the other. If you are a born-again Christian, filled with the Holy Spirit, you will seek to be obedient to the God the Father. You are conscious of His love for you, the highest motivation for loving Him and for loving others. Obedience to God requires you to love one another - and to love those who are not believers; and believe me, I understand that this is not always easy. In fact, in the flesh it is impossible. But we can - and must - love them. But how?

Failure to understand the kind of love God commands may lead to guilt and frustration. The Bible does not say that you are going to have a warm fuzzy feeling for everyone you see. In fact, the Bible clearly warns you to stay away from some people: there are some you must walk away from, and others you had better run away from! How can I love people I must avoid? You can love them with a mental attitude love, pray for them with an understanding that God loves them, Jesus died for them, and you may be the very one He will use to bring them to faith in Him. There are some very godly people in most of our churches who at some time in the past were not very pleasant people. Hey, you may be one of them!

When I first read in the Jackson Clarion Ledger about a brutal murder - in fact, when I read about two very brutal murders - I wanted to see the murderers pay the full price under the law for their crimes. Hanging was too good for them! For that matter, so was the gas chamber at Parchman. The first man had permitted a young pregnant girl to move into his motel room while he was in Jackson, working for the Mississippi State Fair. It was not his baby, but he offered to provide for her. He assured her he could “handle it.” However, in a drunken rage he beat her and strangled her to death. When I visited him in the Hinds County jail I did not know what to expect. I detested what this man had done, but I knew I had an opportunity to witness to Tommy and I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity. Little did I realize I would see Tommy become my brother in the Lord. I had a serious talk with him that day and received a letter from him during the following week, telling me he was “seeking God.” He was saved on the next visit, and I found myself loving this man as a brother in the Lord. I had this *agape* kind of love for him, and I was convinced that, given time, Tommy and I might have become good friends (I was beginning to form a *phileo* type of love for him). I saw him a number of times, including a final visit at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman when Tommy expressed a desire to serve the Lord.

The second man had married a woman, taken out a ten thousand dollar life insurance on her, and two weeks later he murdered her. This was a brutal, cold-blooded, calculated, premeditated murder, and you cannot get much worse than that. If I may "flash" forward for a moment, I will never forget the man who walked up to me after I had preached at camp 4 at Parchman. He was wearing a warm, appreciative smile and while most of the prisoners spoke to me, I could tell that this man was a little different. He stopped right in front of me and asked, "Were you in Jackson last May?" I thought a second and then acknowledged that I was. He asked, "Did you come to the Hinds County Jail?" When I told him I had led a mission trip to the jail every Thursday, he smiled and held up New Testament, showing me the note I had written in the front before giving it to him in Jackson. He said, "I could not see you when we talked then but I remember your voice."

I was permitted to talk with Tommy with two sets of bars between us, but when I witnessed to Frank I had to put my eye up to a heavy mesh over a window and speak to him. I could see him but he could not see me. I was only a voice to him. I deeply loved those two men in the Lord, men whose behavior I hated, men I might have hated had it not been for the love of God. Not only did I have an *agape* type of love for them, I could sense a growing *phileo* type love would have been possible if we had had an opportunity to spend more time together.

Let me stress here that I did not want to see those men freed until they had paid their debt to society and an official board determined that they should be paroled. They still had a debt to pay to society, but there was another kind of debt they could not pay, a debt Jesus paid for them. They received a judicial pardon from the Judge of eternity's court.

In 1 John 3:11, we read, "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another.**" Now, John will paint for us a startling contrast between love and hate. If you are willing to look closely at both love and hate, you will have an opportunity to have your faith in Jesus Christ affirmed, and if it is not affirmed you will have an opportunity to repent. And I am absolutely convinced that there is no failure for which repentance is needed more than in the sin of not loving one another as we should.

I. THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE IS HATE, 3:12-13.

A. Christians Are Commanded to Love One Another, 3:11.

B. Cain Is Given as an Example of One Who Hated.

- 1) Eve might well have assumed at first that Cain was the promised Seed.
- 2) Instead, Cain was of the evil one.
- 3) "Was" implies a position with the evil one.
- 4) "Was" implies an ongoing relationship.

- 5) Cain's behavior was related to his relationship with the evil one.
- 6) Cain's brutal act was not a simple impulse.
- 7) He wanted Abel dead.
- 8) Cain hated Abel because he was evil.
- 9) Hate and evil feed on each other.

C. Cain Slew His Brother.

- 1) This was the first murder in history.
- 2) Cain did not slay one who was a threat to him.
- 3) He slew the one he should have loved.

D. The Reasons for Cain's Murder of Abel Are Basic and Timeless.

- 1) "Because" Cain's deeds were evil, he hated his brother.
 - a. Cain's deeds were apparently continuously evil.
 - b. We are not talking about one simple act here.
 - c. This was not justifiable homicide.
 - d. This was not a sudden impulse.
 - e. This was premeditated murder.
 - f. The murder was incubated and hatched out in heart filled with hate.
- 2) "Because" Abel's deeds were righteous, he was hated by his brother.
 - a. Cain hated Abel because he was of the evil one.
 - b. The "evil one" hates righteousness.
 - c. The righteousness of Abel fed a seething hatred in Cain's heart.
- 3) We might infer that Cain was continuously evil.
- 4) We might also infer that Abel was continuously righteous.
- 5) "Righteous" implies more than human good.
- 6) "Righteous" implies a relationship with God.
- 7) "Righteous" reveals the character and nature of God in one's life.
- 8) There is little wonder that Satan hated Abel.
- 9) If Satan hated Abel, it is to be expected that Cain would hate him.

E. Now Contrast This With Some Things God Hates, Pro. 6:16-19.

*"There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And **hands that shed innocent blood**, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers."*

F. Cain's Overt Act Followed Mental Attitude Sins.

- 1) Murder follows hate, as hate follows envy, jealousy, or covetousness.
- 2) Jesus amplifies this in the Sermon on the Mount.

*"You have heard that the ancients were told, '**YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER**' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell"** (Matt. 5:21-22).*

G. As Cain Hated Abe, the World Will Hate You, 3:12.

- 1) The "because" of verse 12 still applies.
- 2) The world does hate the righteous.
 - a. This explains the intensity of the attacks on Christians.
 - b. This fuels the de-Christianization of America.
 - c. There are many examples: ACLU, Islam, Communism, liberal entertainers, politicians, courts, and educators.
- 3) "If" is a condition of the first class, meaning the world will hate you.

This is being spelled out on television every day and every night as we watch the news of the war in Iraq. First, there is the hatred of so many Islamic people for you because you are an American and because America has supported Israel. Second, the current Iraqi regime (and those friendly to it) hates you because they identify you as a Christian. One Iraqi website proclaims George Bush to be the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The streamer running across the screen reads GEORGE BUSH IS JESUS CHRIST (the one they hate with a passion we can hardly imagine). Radical Islamic leaders look on Americans as Christian crusaders. They have kept their hatred alive by watering it, feeding it, and brooding over it for centuries.

They are not the only ones who hate Christians. When Franklin Graham appeared on Hannity and Combs recently, he appealed to people to pray for President Bush. He was followed by a city councilman from New York and former senator Gary Hart who were passionately upset with Franklin Graham for asking prayer for President Bush and for proclaiming that Christians should seek to help liberate the oppressed. Believe me, both Jesus Christ and committed Christians are hated in the world in which we live.

If you do not experience any hatred from the world, either you are naive, you have removed yourself from the world, or the world does not see enough of Christ in you to concern itself. If Christ is manifested in your life, the evil one will see to it that you are hated by the world, just as you are hated by the evil one.

4) Hate characterizes the world, not the Christian.

II. LOVE OF THE "BRETHREN" IS A PROOF OF SALVATION, 3:14-15.

A. God Wants You to Know You Are His Child, 14a.

1) "We Know" this because we have taken in sound doctrine.

- a. The word means to perceive.
- b. It means to appreciate.
- c. Assurance is not based on what you feel in your heart.
- d. Assurance of salvation is based in the promise of God.
- d. It is something you can, and must know.

2) This is another of the proofs of salvation given in this epistle.

3) What we know is that "we have passed out of death into life".

4) Anyone who needs assurance of salvation can start right here.

B. We Know "Because We Love the Brethren," 14b.

1) This is the agape' kind of love.

2) Agape' is a mental attitude kind of love.

- a. I know God loves me.
- b. I know He loves the "brethren".
- c. I know He has commanded me to love the "brethren".
- d. I know He enables me to love them.
- e. I desire and seek the highest good for others.
- f. I do this even if they do not seem to reciprocate.
- g. I do this for people who are unpleasant.

I do this for people I don't even like! I know this is dangerous because someone may misinterpret it. However, it is an honest confession. I take no pleasure in confessing that there are people I do not like, but to deny it would be a lie. There are people God expects me to love, even if I do not like them - and I am not just talking about not liking their ways, I don't like them. These are people who are obnoxious, offensive, arrogant, and in some cases dangerous. There are people out there who would destroy your child or grandchild for no better reason than their hatred for righteousness and their love for the evil one. Got tells us to avoid them. Yet, if there is an opportunity to

witness to them we must be readily and we must be willing.

- 3) This kind of love is not possible for those who have not passed from death into life.
- 4) Your feelings are subject to sudden changes.
- 5) Mood changes offer no assurance that we have eternal life.
- 6) Because you have taken in sound doctrine, you have assurance of salvation.

C. By Contrast, "He Who Does not Love Abides in Death", 14c.

- 1) Those who love have passed out of death into life.
- 2) Those who do not practice this kind of love still reside in death.
- 3) This is not a Will Rodgers' kind of general love for mankind.
- 4) *Agape'* loves without seeking anything in return.

ILLUSTRATION: George was the chaplain's aid at Parchman many years ago. He was also a prisoner. I often visited with George while waiting for Chaplain Roscoe Hicks to show up (usually at 8:00 A.M.) and tell me where he wanted me to preach that Sunday morning. After some time, he told me to just go to any camp I chose and tell them he had sent me. My first blessing of the day, however, began with my visit with George. George was from some place in Oklahoma where his grandfather was "superintendent" of Sunday School for fifty years. He was serving time for breaking into a business in Jackson, Mississippi. The business belonged to the husband of the WMU President for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, Mrs. Edwina Robinson (as I recall). After George was arrested, the Robinsons got in touch with him and assured him of their concern for him. Through their ministry George returned to the Lord. They supported him through his trial and stayed in touch with him during his incarceration in the Hinds County jail and at Parchman. As soon as he was eligible, they worked to get him out. George needed a job, and guess where he got one? Right! George was counting the days until he would get out and go to work in the store he had robbed (or burglarized which ever it was). I thank the Lord that the Robinsons did not hate George for what he had done to them. I also appreciate fact that they did not wait for some emotion to overcome them. They saw a man in need and moved to meet that need. They not only gave him a job, the first gave themselves.

D. Everyone Who Hates His Brother Is a Murderer, 3:15a.

- 1) That is strong language.

I will never forget listening to R. G. Lee tell about a man he had been asked to visit. He went to his office and asked "the information girl" if he might speak with him. As she tried to think of what to say she was fumbling her "information cards." Just then her boss stepped out of his office, and seeing Dr. Lee, he demanded, "Well, what do you want."

"I'm a Baptist preacher and I want to talk with you about the Lord," he replied.
"You preachers are all alike; cut off you pay and you would quit preaching today!"

"THAT'S A LIE!", challenged the man so often called "the prince of preachers".

After recovering from the shock the business man took his number and told him he would call if he ever wanted to talk with him. Weeks later, Dr. Lee received the call and drove to the man's house, a mansion in that day. His family was gone and he was depressed. He confessed, "I have done everything! Everything but murder, that is."

Dr. Lee said, "You have done that, too."

"What?"

"You have done that, too."

"What are you talking about?"

"Your sins put Jesus Christ on the cross. You and I are both guilty of the death of Jesus Christ."

This man was saved, and what got his attention was the charge that he was a murderer.

2) If you hate your brother the seed of murder is alive in your heart.

- a. Hate kills with the mind.
- b. Hate is the seed, murder the harvest.
- c. When you hate someone he is already dead in your heart.

E. "You Know That no Murderer Has Eternal Life Abiding in Him," 3:15b.

1) Hate is the culmination of mental attitude sins.

2) Those sins include envy, jealousy, and envy.

3) There is no such thing as general hatred, it has an object.

4) There is no such thing as instant hatred.

5) Hate is outgrowth of a festering cancer of feelings and attitudes of the heart.

F. Murder Is the Extreme Opposite of Love.

1) Love is the opposite of lust.

2) Love is the opposite of envy.

3) Love is the opposite of covetousness.

4) Love is the opposite of popularity (you are salt, not sugar!).

- 5) Love is the opposite of just "being religious."
- 6) A religious person may do good through selfish desire for rewards.

G. Love for the Brethren Is a Mature Way of Living.

- 1) To know this is to understand the Christian life.
- 2) To experience this is to have assurance that you have passed from death into life.

CONCLUSION. Love for the brethren is one of the most glorious fruits that grow in the tree of Christian maturity. You know you have passed from death into life if you love the brethren. Make that commitment and continually meditate on the principle of loving one another. Ask the Lord to help you. Above all, do not delay, and do not assume that this is something that just happens.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:16-18

INTRODUCTION. I love some of the three-sixteens of the New Testament. For example, there is John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* And then there is 1 Timothy 3:16: *"And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory."* And of course there is 2 Timothy 3:16, which teaches us that *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;"* (verse 17 completes that statement: *"that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"*).

Perhaps the most challenging of those three-sixteen verses in the first verse in our text today: "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." How is that verse more difficult than any other? Oh, we see what it says - we can read it, quote it, explain it, teach it, and even meditate on it. In fact, we may even recall the names of some who have actually laid down their lives "for the brethren." But have we appropriated that truth and applied it in our own Christian life? What have you done with that verse?

I. GOD SETS BEFORE US THE STANDARD OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, 1 JOHN 3:16.

A. God Wants You to Know Godly Love, 3:16a.

- 1) He wants you to know that He loves you.
- 2) He wants you to know that He loves other believers.
- 3) He wants you to know that He loves lost people.
- 4) He wants us to love one another.

5) Love for one another is proof that we have passed from death unto life, 3:14.

B. Jesus Set the Standard for Love When He Laid Down His Life For You, 3:16b.

- 1) His life was not taken from Him.
- 2) He gave His life for you and me.
- 3) Jesus died twice on the cross.

When Jesus declared, "It is finished," He had completed the sacrifice for you and me. He had taken our sins upon Himself. Paul wrote, "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. 5:21). Ryrie is right: "Here is the heart of the gospel: The sinless Savior has taken our sins that we might have God's righteousness" (RSB). After Jesus declared His sacrifice to be completed, He then "yielded up His spirit."

4) It is true that Jesus died for us.

- a. Many people have died for others.
- b. Soldiers have thrown themselves on hand grenades to save their friends.
- c. Firemen and policemen are prepared to give their lives to protect us.
- d. Jesus, however, did something for us none of those could ever do.

5) Jesus did not just die, He gave His life, the just for the unjust.

6) The death of Jesus is the measure of which love is defined and understood.

C. "We Know Love By This" Sets the Standard for Christian Love.

Please do not miss this. From the time of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the measure of godly love has been set. That is the standard for love. Any time we want to take personal inventory, all we have to do is look back to the greatest manifestation of love in time or eternity. If we ever feel that we have arrived, look to Jesus. If you are ever tempted to boast of your love for others, look to Jesus. In His death on the cross, we do not have one fallen man dying for another, either on impulse or in pre-meditation. He Who knew no sin died for creatures who were set in rebellion against Him. "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom. 5:8).

D. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren", 3:16c.

1) Because Jesus laid down His life for us we should "lay down our lives for the brethren."

The message here is not that we should go out and seek martyrdom in the normal sense of the word. We are told that there were some early believers who foolishly forfeited their lives because they thought they would have a greater reward if they died the death of a martyr. Is that not what the Islamic suicide-murderers are doing? The emphasis in this Scripture is not so much on dying as it is in giving life. Jesus gave His

life for you and He expects you to give your life for the brethren.

In August, 2006, a Fox news journalist and his cameraman were kidnapped by a new Palestinian terrorist organization. After some two weeks they were set free and then we learned that the terrorists ordered them at gun point to convert to Islam. The implication seems to have been that they would be set free if they converted, but if not they would be shot. They converted. To some, this must have seemed a pragmatic move. However, there have been people all over that region who have given their lives rather than convert to this sinister, evil, satanic religion. No one knows how many people there are in that region who are prepared to give their lives for their Lord if faced with a similar situation.

Throughout the history of the church there have been godly men and women who have given their lives for family members or friends. If radical Islam continues to expand and carry the fight to us, we may be facing such a decision at some time in the future.

- 2) It may be more difficult to live for others than to die for them.
- 3) It may be more important to live for others than to die for them.
- 4) It may be more noble to live for others than to die for them.
- 5) No spiritual power is required to live than die for another person.
- 6) Spiritual power is required to give your life as Jesus gave His life for us.

Jesus died twice on the cross. You must die physically for yourself; no one else can do that for you. Only Jesus could die for others spiritually, you cannot do that. Jesus laid down His life "for" us. The word "for" demands substitutionary atonement, as prophesied in Isaiah 53.

We cannot die "for" another in this sense of the word, but this passage from 1 John stresses that we "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This really is a difficult verse. One commentator said, "We may never have an opportunity to do that, but we can give of our substance." While that is true, that does not absolutely fulfill the demands of this verse. You may at some time be called on to lay down your life for another person. Often, in this world, when that happens one lays down his life for a family member - which lost people may do as readily as a Christian.

II. LET US LOVE IN DEED AND IN TRUTH, 1 JOHN 3:17-18.

A. Christians Demonstrate Love By Ministering to Those in Need, 3:17.

- 1) The question in Verse 17 demands a negative response.
 - a. Godly love does not abide in one who is selfish.
 - b. Godly love does not abide in one who is insensitive.
 - c. Godly love is not foolish, but it is generous.

5) There are generous people who are not Christians.

When I was moving to Mississippi College for my freshman year, my parents drove me to school. Few students, especially freshmen had cars in those days. My parents drove me from our home at Sledge, Mississippi to Meridian to visit my mother's brother and sister and their families before going on to Mississippi College. When Mother's brother learned where I was going, he said, "I have three cars out front. Pick one of them out and take it with you." The cars were only two or three years old and in good condition. I asked him, "What if something happens to it?" He said, "Just pull it off on the side of the road and walk off and leave it." Hey, he meant it! He was not a Christian and had not been in church very many times since he was a child. I thought it was a great idea, but my father shot the idea down - questions about liability insurance and other expenses which I some how had not considered. My uncle was very generous. I have known other lost people who were generous.

6) There are some selfish Christians.

7) John is talking about something beyond a natural spirit of generosity.

B. John Is Talking About the Agape' Type of Love in Its Practical Expression.

Agape' is a mental attitude love. A mental attitude love, as we have seen, can be commanded. An emotions driven love cannot be commanded. Paul wrote, "*Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.*" When you begin to think like Jesus you will begin to act like Jesus. When you think like Jesus you will be motivated to help those who are in need of your service or your material possessions. Let me stress this one thing: loving your spouse or child does not necessarily fulfill the Second Great Commission. There is no merit in loving those you should naturally love. While great emphasis is needed on loving family members in a biblical and godly way, we can do that and still fall short of God's perfect will for us.

C. "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth", 3:18.

1) We are commanded not to love in word only.

2) It is often easier to pay lip service than to render practical service.

3) Some had rather invest words than shoe leather.

4) We are commanded to show our love in deeds.

This applies to practical service. The early church understood this principle: "*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need*" (Acts 2:44-45). Jesus explains the principle and provides the motivation for this service (Matt. 25:35-40).

5) We are commanded to show our love in truth.

Christians must demonstrate their love for others "in deed and truth." We understand

what it means to show love "in deed", but what does it mean to show love in "truth"? In the first place, "The Truth" in Scripture refers to Jesus, and "truth" usually denotes sound doctrine. We must show love in deed, but that does not mean we are to disregard sound principles. Godly love is generous but not foolish. For example, if there is reason to believe a person will spend any money you give him on alcohol or drugs, you had better determine what his needs are and help with groceries or the rent.

6) Spiritually mature Christians will love in truth.

CONCLUSION. *"Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."*

III. CHRISTIAN LOVE IS THE ASSURANCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD, 3:19-24.

There are four ways the Holy Spirit produces assurance of salvation in 3:14-24. They are summed up in these three of the nine tests or proofs that we know the Lord:

TEST THREE - Love of the brethren, 3:14-18.

TEST FOUR - Freedom from condemnation by our heart, 3:19-20.
Prayers are answered, 3:21-22.

TEST FIVE - "By the Spirit whom He has given us," 3:23-24.

In 3:18, John wrote, "Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth..."

3:19 - HOW WE WILL KNOW. *"...That is how we will know we are of the truth, and will convince our hearts in His presence."* Once again, we find repetition in this beautiful little epistle. Repetition on man's part may suggest a short memory, limited training in writing, or even imply a limited capacity to focus on issues. In the Scripture, nothing is there without significance. The because and therefore of the Bible are significant. The repetition, as important as it is to us today, was especially important to those saints who lived before the printing press, the information age, and the instant recall of the computer age.

The Lord wants people to be saved and He wants all who are saved to know they are saved. I spent a lot of time with my sons when they were babies, toddlers, pre-schoolers, children, and youth. I told them over and over that I loved them and made them aware of the fact that I would always love them and that they would always be a part of my family. My own father never once told me that he loved me - but don't feel sorry for me! There was never a day that I doubted it. We need reassurance and God provides it. Abundantly! How? Just as He has said in verse 18, "By the Spirit whom He has given us."

3:20 - IF OUR HEARTS. *"Because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things."* Now get this! Your salvation does not depend upon how you feel in your

heart!!! Jesus said, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand"* (John 10:28). They will never perish, even when they fear, doubt, stumble, or dishonor Him by not "feeling it in my heart." That may not satisfy the human desire to prove our worthiness, but we have God's Word on it.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:19-22

INTRODUCTION. The First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know Him. *"And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments"* (1 John :3). Our Lord wants us to be saved - He wants us to know His Son. He wants us to be sure - and He gives us many down to earth tests by which we may know that we know Him. Furthermore, He wants us to show it - if you are saved and you know it, do more than say, "Amen!"

I. GOD WANTS CHRISTIANS TO KNOW THAT THEY KNOW HIM, 1 John 3: 19.

A. Doubt Is a Serious Matter.

- 1) Doubt cannot coexist with faith (Matt. 21:21).
- 2) Doubt hinders prayer (Matt. 21:21).
- 3) Doubt prevents you from bearing fruit.
- 4) No one has an immunity to doubt.

A young lady paused as she walked by me one Sunday morning just long enough to say, "I need to talk with you sometime, but not now. I have a class to teach. But I have been having some doubts about my salvation this week." I assured her that I would talk with her, but she said that it might have to be the next week I asked her to spend a lot of time in First John. The next Sunday morning, as she walked through the sanctuary she was radiating joy. She said, "It's all right. I'm fine. The Lord has given me assurance." This was not some nominal believer. One of the most remarkable testimonies I had ever heard involved this young lady.

When a neighbor had moved to Nederland, Texas several years earlier, people warned her that she was "moving in next door to Bill and Joyce Hinsen, the biggest bunch of Baptists in Nederland." The very dedicated Catholic lady, Kay, was very leery of her new neighbors, from the first day when the Joyce came over to see if she needed any help with the unpacking. Kay watched her neighbors for several years, trying to find proof that they were not for real. There was something disturbing about these people but she couldn't figure out what it was.

Kay told me that she was never able to find proof that Bill and Joyce were hypocrites. She was always on guard, expecting them to try to convert her at any moment. It never happened. Instead, they were model neighbors. Not only that, they lived a life that made her constantly question hers. One day, she realized that their daughter, Billie, now a teenager, had begun to date. Kay made a decision to watch Billie rather than

her parents. Young people face a lot of temptations, so she would just watch Billie for any sign of impropriety.

Kay said that after she had watched this teenaged girl for a couple of years she became more and more disturbed. One day, she said, "I walked into my kitchen and fell on my knees and prayed, 'Lord, those people have something I don't have and I need it. Right now I am asking you to give me whatever it is they have.'" Kay had become a Christian because of the living testimony of a teen aged girl. Billie was that Sunday School teacher who, for a very brief time experienced doubt about her salvation. When she turned to the Word of God and prayerfully sought assurance she found it. And so will you.

B. This Epistle Tells Us How We May Know That We Know Jesus Christ.

- 1) You know you are saved if you walk in the light, 1 John 1:6.
- 2) Obedience to God's Word is a proof that you are saved, John 2:3.
- 3) Christians have a genuine love for other believers, 1 John 3:14.
- 4) The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit assures us that we know God, 1 John 4:13.
- 5) "Whoever, confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God" (1 John 4:5).

C. Our Text Offers Further Proof of Salvation to Believers.

- 1) We must not try to convince a lost person he or she is saved.

And by the same token, we must be very careful not to try to convince a saved person that he or she is lost. I was still very young in the ministry when I heard some pastors express concern about an evangelist who had preached in revival services in a church they knew. He had managed to convince most of the members present that they were lost and a large percentage of the members were baptized again. Those were the days when the state Baptist paper published the number of decisions made in revivals. The evangelists who reported the highest numbers became very popular. Now, I am not criticizing that. What I am criticizing is the practice of creating doubt. It may go something like this:

"If you want to be sure you are going to Heaven we can settle that right now. If you are saved you remember the preacher who was preaching and what he was preaching. You will remember the Scripture and you will remember the invitation. Do you remember that? If you don't, you have never been saved.

"Why don't you settle that right now? All you have to do is repent and be baptized right now while it is fresh on your mind, while the Holy Spirit is working in your heart. If you would like for me to pray for you to know what to do, just bow your head and close your eyes. Now raise your hand. Let me pray for you. Now, let's all stand, with

heads bowed and eyes closed. Now all of you who raised your hand a while ago, you look right at me. I want all of you to simply step out to the aisle. Now, you come on down."

2) Every believer needs assurance of salvation.

Lost church members certainly need to be confronted with it, and they can be led to face this fact without creating doubt in the hearts of believers. God wants you to know, not doubt. He wants you to be sure you are a born again believer. He wants you to grow in His grace and knowledge. No one grows when they are constantly starting over at ground zero. A doubting Christian is not a growing Christian. A doubting believer is not bearing the fruit of the spirit.

Assurance of your salvation enhances and encourages faith, and faith assures the believer of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Doubt and faith cannot live in peaceful co-existence. Doubt is the enemy of faith, but faith destroys doubt.

3) A child needs to be reassured of relationships everyday.

4) God offers us constant proof that we have a relationship with Him.

D. Now, Look at the Proof God Offers Us in Verse 19.

1) "By this" refers to the statement made in verse 18: *"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."*

2) The love God requires is more than lip service.

3) To love in deed implies action and service.

4) To love in truth denotes sound doctrine.

5) God commands a love that is practical and realistic.

There is no merit in being stupid! If you give a drunk money he may well spend it on alcohol. The same applies to drugs. If you give money to a professional "church bum" who travels across the country trying to con money out of well meaning pastors and church members, you only encourage him in what he is doing. We must be careful not to turn away someone who really needs our help, but we should not be foolish.

Showing love in word and deed does not mean we have to be blind or ignorant. Bill operated a large Mississippi delta farm. One of his new tractor drivers came to him one day and asked to borrow one hundred dollars so that he could take his tiny baby to a doctor in Jackson, Mississippi. Bill told him he would get the money for him and give him the time off to take the baby to the doctor. However, on the way back from the bank, Bill stopped by a small post office to pick up his mail, and while there visited briefly with other farmers. Finally, he said, I need to run down to the field to give "George" some money so he can take his baby to a doctor in Jackson.

His neighbor, asked, "Bill, have you ever seen that baby?" Bill looked at him, wonder-

ing why he would ask such a question. Then he said, "Well, no, I haven't seen the baby. He just told me about it."

"Why don't you ask him to show you the baby?"

As Bill drove to the field, George saw and stopped the tractor and jumped down and ran across the field to meet him. When he stopped by the driver's side of the truck, Bill told him he had the money, but that he was worried about the baby. He asked if he was planning to drive the baby to the doctor or if the baby needed to go by ambulance. He added that he was really concerned about the long trip to Jackson if the baby was very ill. George assured him the baby could ride in an automobile, but Bill continued to express concern.

Finally, Bill said, "George, why don't you take me to see the baby. We may need to send him by ambulance and if we do you are going to need more money. What else could George do but get into the truck? Bill asked for directions and George directed him down one gravel road after another. George seemed indecisive. He seemed to be making up directions as they drove. After driving down several country roads, George pointed to a house in a curve and told Bill that was where he lived. Bill pulled into the yard and George told him to follow him. George opened a door - rather hesitantly, Bill later reflected. There was no one in the living room, so George walked across the room and pointed at a tiny baby sleeping in a baby bed. George said, "That's him."

Suddenly, a woman came into the room and there was no hiding her surprise. "George, what are you doing here?" she demanded. To which, he responded, "Sarah, this is Mr. Bill, the man I work for. He wanted to see OUR baby."

Sarah blustered, "George Smith, you know that is not your baby! What are you doing here? You get out of my house!"

When Bill told his friend what had happened the neighbor said, "I thought so. He worked for me last year and tried the same thing on me. Only, I let him have the money."

II. NEITHER SALVATION NOR ASSURANCE DEPENDS ON HOW YOU FEEL, 3:20-21.

A. Your Heart May Condemn You.

- 1) Your heart may condemn you following some adversity.
- 2) Your heart may condemn you when your faith is put to the test.
- 3) Your heart may condemn you during a national crisis, like war.
- 4) Your heart may condemn you when you see a saint stumble.
- 5) Your heart may condemn you when you grieve the Holy Spirit.

- 6) Your heart may condemn you when you quench the Holy Spirit.
- 7) Your heart may condemn you when you are tempted.

B. God Is Greater Than Your Heart.

- 1) Your salvation does not depend upon what you feel.

Feelings are subject to change, sometimes without explanation or understanding. You simply "get up on the wrong side of the bed" that morning. You leave a worship service feeling like your whole life is awash in the glory of the Lord and then one of the deacons cuts you off as you try to leave the parking lot. The euphoria is gone, and now you feel guilty. "If I were a Christian, would I let little things like that bother me?" The devil knows how to capitalize on those doubts.

2. For assurance of your salvation look to the Lord.

"I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:28)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

3. The fact that your heart condemns you does not mean that God does.

C. Your Salvation Depends Upon What God Knows, not What You Feel.

"Therefore being justified (completed action in the past from which we receive continuing benefits) by faith, we have peace (presently) with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access (continually) by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2, KJV).

Assurance of salvation depends upon the sure and certain Word of God, not upon the fickle feelings of one still struggling with an old sinful nature, battling Satan, and wrestling with temptations every day. I thank God my salvation does not depend upon my feelings. There is something much better, and that is the promise of God.

D. God Assures Us So That We May Have Confidence Before Him.

- 1) God gives us the faith we must have to believe for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).
- 2) He gives us the faith we must have for obedience to Him.
- 3) He gives us the faith we must have for prayer.

4) He gives us the faith we must have to overcome doubt.

E. The Attributes of God Provide Proof of Salvation.

1) He is omnipotent: "He is greater than our heart."

2) He is omniscient: "He knows all things."

3) He is accessible: "we have confidence before Him."

CONCLUSIONS. If I want my sons to know that I love them, is it not reasonable to assume that our heavenly Father wants us to know we belong to Him? Is it not reasonable to assume that He would offer us assurance of a personal relationship with Him? Would God do any less for us? He loves His children and He is constantly reassuring them of His love. But we must not stop here. God also loves lost people. He gave His only begotten Son to die on a cruel cross, not for good people, not for righteous people, but for people who living in rebellion against Him (Rom. 5:8).

GOD IS GREATER THAN YOUR HEART. God is greater than your fears. God is greater than your doubts. God is greater than your emotions. The late Adrian Rogers was known for what are now called "*Adrianisms*." He not only had the most amazing voice we could imagine, he had a way with words. He once said, "Your emotions are the weakest part of you. Why would God do His greatest work in the weakest part of you?" Your salvation depends upon a right relationship with God, not how you feel about it at the moment.

3:21 - WE HAVE CONFIDENCE. "*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn [us] we have confidence before God.*" It is far better that our hearts do not condemn us. Fear can paralyze a sincere believer and when he or she does not remember the promises of the Word. We must have confidence on God, and we can have confidence in Him. Satan is the great accuser and he will make every attempt to paralyze us with fear that we may lose our salvation - or fear that we have lost it. We have confidence and assurance from the Word of God, and the affirmation of the Holy Spirit that we belong to Him, regardless of how we feel on any particular day.

3:22 - WE ASK FROM HIM. "*And can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.*" In John 15:7, Jesus promises, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you." We are invited,

to ask of Him; we are encouraged in the strongest terms to call on Him. We know that our heavenly Father hears those who approach Him in faith, humility, and confidence. Stephen Olford used to say that faith is not believing God can do it, faith is believing God will do it. How can any believer doubt that God can do it? The test is believing that God will do it.

Olford told the story of the time when his missionary father was taking his family from one village in Africa to another, depending upon native bearers to carry their luggage and supplies. They came to a river where they were supposed to find water to refill canteens but the river was dry. During the night the native guides and bearers deserted them, taking all the water. They left them to die. Olford said that the entire family was about to perish from thirst when his father walked out into the open and lifted his voice to the Lord, "Father, I know you did not bring us all the way to Africa for us to perish like this." Then, he looked to heaven and cried out, "In the name of God, I command you to form clouds and send rain." Within ten minutes, Stephen Olford said, the family was catching rain water in cans and cooking utensils. That is believing God will supply our needs.

3:23 - HIS COMMAND. *"Now this is His command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us."* Our relationship with God is amazing in its simplicity. What does the Lord expect of us? "Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ." That is first and foremost. Nothing else matters until that is settled. There is salvation in no other. There is no diversity in the only God who can possibly exist. Liberal Americans are ready to embrace an all inclusive God who is open to all paths. They will even pay homage to a Jesus who is inclusive, innocuous, tolerant, and non-judgmental. What they reject is the God of the Bible, the Christ of the Cross, the Christ who will return do deal with all enemies and judge the world. There are not many ways to God; there is one way to God. We are not all going to heaven, regardless of the path we take, there is but one path and that is the way our Lord calls the straight and narrow path.

HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. We must believe in "His Son." That identifies the One in whom we must believe as the "only begotten Son" of the One true God (John 3:16). This is the One God identified and approved at the time of His baptism: "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

He is Jesus, the prophet who would fulfill the promises God made to Moses when He announced his successor. It is very interesting that God told Moses his successor would be Joshua. Joshua, the son of Nun, was the immediate successor to Moses, the one who would lead in the conquest of the Promised Land. The ultimate prophet to whom God referred is another Joshua. His New Testament name is Jesus. Jesus is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament name Joshua. Joshua means Yahweh is my salvation and the New Testament Joshua is God's salvation.

A few years ago, I was driving through the parking lot of the WalMart store in West Monroe, LA, when I saw a bus with a very familiar sign on the side: JEWS FOR YESHUA. Jews for Joshua. I had been reading their newsletter for several years. They use this title because so many Jews hate the very name of Jesus. I stopped and visited with two of the touring choir from that organization. While I was there, a security guard drove over and told them they would have to move the bus because it was parked across more than one parking space. My first thought was that if the security guard had known who these people were he should have been calling the local television stations and the newspaper office. These Jewish believers understand the significance of the name Jesus.

We must believe in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus is His personal name, Christ is His title. There have been reports that some in the news media will refer to Jesus, but never to Jesus Christ, which not only identifies Him as the Jesus of the New Testament but also identifies Him as the Anointed One. In other words, to use both the name and the title is to add commentary to the personal name and to identify Jesus as the Messiah.

The second part of His command is that we love one another. In Christ there is a vertical relationship, a relationship with God. There is also a horizontal relationship, a relationship with one another. When asked to teach them to pray, Jesus taught His disciples, and therefore us, to pray "Our Father." He did not teach us to pray "My Father."

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 3:21-24

INTRODUCTION. This is a wonderful epistle. It meets a need that lies deep in the heart of every believer. I know I need it. In the Gospels, we learn that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He died on the cross to pay our sin debt. He arose that we might live. God wants us to know that, so he inspired Paul and others to record His assurance that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved - not may be, will be. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Now, once you are saved God wants you to know you are saved. He promises to save to the uttermost all those who place their trust in Him - yet no one can come to him in the flesh, or on their own. He chooses us, we do not choose Him. He also promises to keep all those whom He saves. He makes it possible for you to have assurance of salvation. He wants you to know. And you can know. Now, let me ask you one question: If you refuse to accept what God says, is that not sin?

I. HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU MAY KNOW YOU ARE SAVED, 1 JOHN 3:21-22.

We need to connect this with the preceding verses to keep it in context:

"We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him, in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God" (1 John 3:19-21).

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight (3:21).

A. "Whatever We Ask We Receive from Him."

Do you believe that? I mean, really and truly believe that? Then will you pause and think with me about a time when you prayed as fervently as you knew how - and nothing happened. Has that ever happened to you? Well, I have a confession. That has happened to me more than one time. I am sorry, but that is an honest confession. I was thirty-six years old and pastor of a very strong church in Texas when I be-

gan having severe pain in my left foot. My secretary volunteered to call her foot specialist and make an appointment for me. After several attempts to solve my problem, two "foot specialists" had almost destroyed both feet. I could not believe it.

I remember distinctly praying that God would give me relief in just one toe, and that the next morning when I awoke there would be some sign of relief. I quoted Scripture to the Lord: "The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and Lord, I am praying as fervently as I know how." The next morning it was worse!

So! Either God was misleading me, or I was not a righteous man. Which was it? Have you ever noticed that when we pray for God to do something for someone, we try to "give Him an out"? We remind ourselves that we had prayed, "Thy will be done." Maybe, we reason, the person for whom we prayed is guilty of some secret sin. Or is it my sin that is hindering my prayer. The great accuser will tell us anything that will confuse and discourage us.

Now, do you remember the verse we have already seen that tells us that even when our heart condemns us, God will not condemn us. In other words, our relationship with our heavenly Father does not depend upon how we feel, or even what we may be thinking at any particular time. It depends upon the sure promise of a holy God, a God Who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.

There are many popular writers today, but I am still amazed at the work of many great saints of another century - from Thomas Chalmers, to Meyer, to Bounds, to Andrew Murray. The first book by Andrew Murray I read was WITH CHRIST IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER, but there have been many others since that one. Let me share with you something Andrew Murray said in one of his books: The proof that you have worked a math problem right is in the answer. The proof that you have prayed aright is in the answer. We are invited to pray, asking in faith, expecting to receive an answer. If there is no answer, or if we do not recognize an answer, we must take .

1) Jesus specifically made that promised (John 15:7). *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."*

2) "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16b NKJV).

B. We Have Assurance of Salvation "Because We Keep His Commandments".

1) John the Baptist makes the point. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (John 3:36).

2) Jesus is very specific about that. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (Jn 14:16).

He also said, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me"* (John 14:21a).

3) This epistle affirms this (1 John 2:3-4).

C. We Do the Things That Are Pleasing in His Sight.

- 1) Jesus taught this in the Model Prayer. *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10).
- 2) Jesus reinforces this in Mark 3:25. *"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."*
- 3) Paul amplifies this. *"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13).

II. WE ARE COMMANDED TO BELIEVE IN HIM, (1 John 3:23).

A. Christians Are People Who Obey God's Commandments (3:22).

B. He Commands Us to Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. (3:23).

- 1) Lost people are commanded to repent (Acts. 2:38a).
- 2) Believers are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ for answered prayer.

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. 21:22) .

"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

III. GOD OFFERS PROOF POSITIVE THAT WE CHILDREN OF GOD, 3:24.

A. "And the One Who Keeps His Commandments Abides in Him," 3:24a.

"And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3).

B. "We Know...That He Abides in Us, By the Spirit Whom He Has Given Us," (3:24).

C. Review Some of the Proofs of Our Salvation.

- 1) You eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord, 1 John 3:1.
- 2) You have a growing freedom from sinful behavior, 1 John 3:6.
- 3) You have a genuine love for other believers, 1 John 3:14.
- 4) You demonstrate your love in word and deed, 1 John 3:18.

CONCLUSION. There are many other proofs, or tests by which we may know that we know Jesus Christ, that we have a redemptive relationship with Him. It is very impor-

tant for us to know that the assurance of our salvation does not depend upon our quest for some illusive sign or series of signs. There are many proofs offered in the Scripture, many of them in this one little epistle. Not the least of these is the fact that when we are saved God places His Spirit in our heart. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential, both in salvation, and in providing assurance of salvation to believers. *"By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit"* (1 John 4:13). He wants you to be sure of your relationship with Him. Martin Luther, when the devil came to him and asked him to open the door of his heart so that he could come in and discuss some very important matters with Him, said "I don't have the keys to the door; God has them. Ask Him if you wish."

3: 24 - REMAINS IN HIM. *"The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us."* Two things are stressed here and we have seen both before. First, the one who remains in Jesus Christ keeps His commands. Second, He has placed His Spirit in each believer to confirm the fact that we remain in Him and that He remains in us.

CONCLUSION to Volume I, "To Know And Know You Know", a study guide to the Epistles of John: The Gospel According to John was written that we might know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know Him.