

1 John 1

2 John says "reject false teachers;" 3 John says "receive true teachers;" 1 John shows you how to tell the difference.

- 1) This parallels 2 Peter 1:16-18 in confirming their message about Jesus by their senses - "heard, seen, touched." And the seeing was not a glimpse, it ("looked at") was a viewing attentively, a contemplative study of the One seen. John's message about Jesus as the Word of life was firsthand. This "beginning" is like that of Mark 1:1, relating to the life and work of Jesus. Some of the earlier "in the beginnings" are Genesis 1:1 (creation) and John 1:1 (eternity past).
- 2) Twice in this verse John tells us that Christ "appeared." Amazing love that God would show us life by showing us Jesus! He didn't leave us in the dark. What John saw, he then bore witness to the validity of, and then he announced, proclaimed it to men so we might have eternal life by believing in the One Whom he proclaimed.
- 3), 4) These verses state two purposes for the conveyance of the gospel. The first purpose is a dual fellowship. This is a sharing, a joint participation, a partnership. There is horizontal fellowship with other saints in the church; and there is vertical fellowship with the Father and His Son. Not only has God revealed His Son to us, but He also gives us the privilege of fellowship with the Divine! John adds another medium, that of writing. He writes this for the filling up of the joy of the saints. A multi-media presentation of Jesus for fellowship and for joy. Glory!
- 5) As an apostle of our Lord Jesus, John had been directly taught by Him. Those teachings he was obligated to share with others. The message announced here is about the holiness of God. Darkness in Scripture often pictures sin; likewise, light frequently depicts holiness. God is "pure light," absolute holiness, even though He created a world that allowed the entrance of sin in the angelic and human spheres. In God we can find no impurities, no imperfections, moral or otherwise.
- 6) It having been said that God is light, John now deals with a false claim made by some. He says they claim to have fellowship with God while walking in darkness (sin)! He makes it clear that such a claim is a lie, and the claimant isn't practicing the truth. Amos asked, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" John says, "No!"
- 7) Now walking in the light is not sinless perfection. John clearly teaches that believers do commit sin - they just don't habitually practice it. Walking in holiness includes confession of sin and its resulting cleansing. Here John speaks of that perpetual effect Christ's blood has of "keeping us cleansed" from sin's defilement. Like the coal-miner's tear ducts keep his eyes constantly cleansed from the coal dust. "How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior, stepping in the light."
- 8), 10) God's Word is truth. Romans 5:12 says sin is a universal human malady, illustrated by the universality of human death. Romans 3:23 says "all have sinned." A man claiming he has no sin nature is self-deceived. When he claims he does not commit acts of sin, he calls God a liar and shows that God's Word is absent from his life. All around us is evidence of the truth that men are universally sinners. Look at courts, jails, cemeteries, the need for laws to protect men from other men, and much more. The truth is we all have a sin nature, and we all sin!
- 9) There is however a remedy for the defilement of sin in a believer's life. Verses 1 and 2 of chapter 2 speak of the Divine side of this in the Advocacy of Christ. This verse tells us that the human side is to confess our sins. We must simply tell God what we did, feeling as nearly like He does about our sin as we can. Such a confessional attitude promises Divine forgiveness and cleansing from the defilement of sin in a believer's life. His soul's condition and destiny are safe.

1 John 2

- 1), 2) John tells his "little children" that he purposed in writing to them to help them not sin; yet he knew we would, and he reminds us that Jesus, not a shyster, but the Righteous One, stands beside God in our defense. Christ's position at court is made sure because He offered Himself as a satisfactory Sacrifice (propitiation) before God. "Atoning" here (NIV) is an unfortunate translation; atonement is OT "covering." Christ doesn't cover our sin, He removes it! His sacrifice, while only efficient for believers, is sufficient for the whole world of sinners. What wondrous love!
- 3) Dr. Stott says the following verses give us two tests of the genuineness of a believer's profession. 1) the moral test (3-6) - obedience to God's Word; 2) the social test (7-11) - love for the brethren. Obedience gives the believer assurance that he knows the Lord, a priceless possession. Not necessarily perfect obedience, but habitual.
- 4) Three earlier claims have been rebuffed; a fourth receives the same fate here. The claim is that a man knows the Lord, but he fails to do what God commands. It is hypocrisy to have this claim and this conduct in the same life. It is more than hypocrisy, it is deceit. The claimant is a liar, and he clearly does not have God's truth in him.
- 5) Vine says "His Word is the whole, of which His commandments are the parts." God's love had its beginning work in us through redemption; it flourishes and is made complete when the believer goes on to mature obedience. John once again says that obedience is a ground of assurance. We can KNOW that we are "in Christ."
- 6) Peter said Jesus lived an example for us to "follow in His steps." John agrees that one who says he has union and communion with Christ should prove it by walking in the manner in which Christ walked in the days of His flesh. Fellowship with God produces a good representation of Him in this world. Thus the name "Christians" (Acts 11:26).
- 7) My wife and I have often used the term *agapetos* as an expression of endearment. You can see its root, *agape*, at the beginning of the word. That is the word John uses here. The "dear friends" of the NIV is not strong enough to capture his love for his readers; they are his "beloved ones." Their receiving his command will be made easier by the love relationship they share. He does not introduce some new rule in the middle of the game; the command he shares is one they have heard and had from the beginning of their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- 8) John does not contradict himself here; he simply reminds us that though the command to love is old, the love of the Savior and the love of His people are as fresh as the dawn. The sunrise in the eastern morning is as old as creation, and yet each new day's event is fresh. Love and light are to replace darkness and hate for those who belong to Jesus. Christ's love was demonstrated in His sacrifice on the cross. We get to display His love in and through us in a multitude of ways in

our daily interactions with people, especially those closest to us.

9) In this letter John challenges and refutes a number of claims that people make - here is an example. Someone claims to be in the light (to be a Christian), but they harbor hatred for a brother (like Cain hated Abel). John declares without apology that such a person is really still in the darkness (not a Christian believer). When Christ, Who is love personified, takes charge of a life, He fills it with His love. He said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). The absence of love cannot argue for the presence of life.

10), 11) Love is a stepping stone to Christ and heaven. When people see us abiding in love - that is, remaining there, living there - they can be drawn to the Savior we profess. Our love shows that what we profess, we possess. Our lives are not perfect, but when we walk in integrity, we neither stumble nor cause another to stumble. We may be instruments used of God to help people get to know Him. On the other hand, hate is a stumbling block over which people may fall and plunge into hell. When people see lives filled with hate for others, they view someone whose walk is in darkness. The person doing the hating aimlessly wanders through life, not knowing where their life of hate is headed. Hatred is murder in the heart; murder is hatred in the hand. Love wishes good to people, while hatred wishes them ill. May God fill our lives with love and chase away the desire to hate.

12), 13), 14) Five times here John speaks of writing to believers. He describes them in 3 ways, "little children," "young men," and "fathers." To the little children he writes reminding them that their sins have been forgiven. All of us are little children, needing to be reminded and rejoice in the wonderful forgiveness of sins that we have because of Him Whose name is Jesus. May we never forget our beginnings. It is good to have the mature saints in the church. All of us should be maturing, regardless of the number of our years with Christ. Maturity rests in its settled, final, experiential knowledge of Christ. The mature saint is not rattled by the bumps in the road, but exhibits a serenity in Christ during the storms. The young men are those at the forefront of spiritual warfare. Satan is attacking the church, and these young men are standing their ground, experiencing victory. Lest the little children falter, he reminds them that, like the fathers, they have a settled knowledge of Christ. He addresses the Fathers again, repeating his previous words exactly. Those who have walked with and know Christ pass the faith on to other generations. The strength for the young men to overcome Satan in spiritual warfare is the presence of the Word of God, which is very much alive in them. Jesus also experienced victory by the Word.

15), 16) What powerful words are these! It is natural for the old nature (and we all have one) to love the world; John commands us to "stop loving the world." His solemn words tell us that "world-love" and "Father-love" are mutually exclusive. Thomas Chalmers spoke of the "expulsive power of a new affection." A growing love for God will mean a shrinking love for this world. May "the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." John now blesses us with a broad-brush description of sin's domain, more familiarly called, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." An interesting comparison can be made here with Genesis 3:6 (Eve's temptation) and the temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4). "Good for food" = "the lust of the flesh." "Pleasant to the eyes" = "the lust of the eyes." "Desired to make one wise" = "the pride of life." In each of these, the 3 areas of sin are Satan's appeal. Adam was defeated, Jesus overcame, and we get to choose the end result of our warfare.

17) Here John gives us a description of the contrasting conclusions of the two choices available to us. We can attach ourselves to something that lasts or to that which is short-lived. The present world system is doomed to extinction; the things pertaining to God will never pass away. John uses terms that suggest either abiding or moving on. A child wants to be raised by a parent who stays at home, not some drifting vagabond. Children of God can do God's will and then abide; others choose the lust of this world, which is passing by, moving on, leading to destruction and death.

18) I have long maintained that we have been in the "last days" ever since Jesus returned to heaven. Though he wrote nearly 2,000 years ago, John confirms my opinion. "It is the last hour" uses the word "eschatos," which yields our word "eschatology," the study of last things. Daniel had written of the Antichrist (7:8, 24, 8:24, 25, 11:36), and Jesus had spoken of his "abomination that makes desolate" (Matthew 24:15). Paul wrote (2 Thessalonians 2) about this end-time villain. There is surely an Antichrist coming. His name means one who is "against Christ," and it includes the idea of one who is a "substitute Christ" ("instead of"). Before this single personage appears there will have been many "little antichrists" in the world. If you know much about history, you can likely name a few - Nero, Caligula, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and such.

19) John had some false teaching, Christ opposers in mind, and they had left the Apostolic fold and teaching because they had a different origin than John and the other apostles. Their departure was a sign of their difference, and they were not to be trusted or given a hearing by the church. Those with Apostolic sanction remained in Apostolic fellowship - not these!

20), 21) As ancient kings were anointed by heaven's messengers - the prophets - so NT (church) believers have an anointing from heaven. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives gives us the ability to gain spiritual knowledge, and we are also enabled thereby to test knowledge for its truthfulness. Every believer has this capacity, though some develop it more than others by use. We are able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and the more we do that, the better we become at it! Immersion in Scripture helps us know what truth "tastes like," and enables us to "spit out the error."

22), 23) Dr. Walter Hughes of Canada said in my hearing, "You cannot think right in the rest unless you think right in Him (Jesus)." What a powerful and accurate statement! One problem with every cult is that they deny some major truths about Jesus. He said, "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life." Scripture is the written Word, and Jesus is the Living Word. One cannot deny Jesus and believe in God. The Father and the Son are One. It is in the spirit of antichrist to deny Jesus; it is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to confess Jesus. To confess the Son is to possess the Father.

24), 25) There is much here about "abiding" (the word used three times). Don't let these Johnny-come-latelies undermine the truth you learned from the start! Let God's truth remain in you, and that will be evidence that you remain in the Father and the Son. There is a mutual abiding here, as John 14:23 speaks of the Father and the Son abiding in us! They in us and we in them - now that's some abiding! In 5:12 John will write that possessing the Son is to possess eternal life. That is the fulfillment of a promise that is spoken of here.

26), 27) Here is some more about abiding. John states that he is writing to his readers about folks who would deceive them. The comfort he offers includes that God's anointing "abides" in them, and it precludes the necessity of them being misled by these false teachers. John would never mean here that teachers in the church are non-essential. The Spirit gave the gift of teaching to certain folks for a reason. And the Spirit gave "pastor-teachers" (Ephesians 4:11) to the church, again, not without purpose. Every believer has the ability to learn spiritual truth from the Word through the Spirit. Yet God has gifted certain people to teach us, and we are so blessed by that. Just the week of this writing one of my favorite teachers, Dr. Robert Delnay, went to be with the Lord. Fifty years after I sat in his classroom, his voice still sounds in my ear from time to time. Thank God for blessed teachers. As individual believers we are called upon to "abide in Him."

28) Have you ever bowed your head in shame when someone suddenly appeared because you knew you had disappointed them? Such shame came because of disobedience, failure to comply with their wishes, their instructions. We have all known that miserable feeling. John commands us to abide in Him to prevent that failure resulting in shame.

29) When we see a person who "does right" as a practice of life, we may conclude that they have been born of God. The new birth, enabled by the righteous God, is the only plausible explanation for one who was once a sinner now being able to habitually do what is right. Such right living is the evidence of salvation, not the cause of it.

1 John 3

1) I can hear John saying, "Just look at the kind of love God has given to us!" It is a result of God's permanent gift of love to us that we are referred to by heaven as having been "born of God." And that is exactly what we are! But, sadly, the world, who did not know Him, neither recognizes the birthright of His children. Sad for them.

2) We are presently members of God's family (not waiting for that when we die). There is nothing about our physical appearance that the world could take notice of. That comes later, when Jesus comes; we will be made like Him in the process we call glorification. The body He has had since the resurrection is the model for our bodies.

3) The confident hope that Jesus is coming and that we shall be changed to be like Him motivates us to give every cooperation to the Holy Spirit to make us like Him now. "Christians" are so called because they are like Him!

4) John here indicts those who practice sin as practicing lawlessness. God gives us parameters for living in His Word, also called His "law." To step outside those parameters is to miss God's mark and to practice sin.

5) What a statement! Jesus came into view to "take away" our sins (John Baptist used this expression in John 1:29 - "... that 'taketh away' the sin of the world"). This was His great work. An aspect of His person is added in a plain statement of the sinlessness of Christ. "To be like Him Who is 'sinless' is to strive each day to 'sin less.'"

6) Here John seems to be contradicting the claims of some to be Christians, and yet they go on practicing sin - an ancient "antinomianism." He asserts positively that everyone who abides in Christ does not go on sinning. He negatively puts forth that everyone who practices sin is *blind to* and *ignorant of* Christ. No middle ground.

7), 8) Someone was leading John's little children astray, and he was properly concerned. He charged his readers not to allow men to deceive them. The truth is that people who have been made righteous live righteously. And the standard of righteousness is God's righteous Son, Jesus Christ. Dr. Stott here says that our parentage is either Divine or Diabolical. The Devil sins from the beginning; those, therefore, practicing sin demonstrate a source in him. Jesus came into view to loose us from Satan's works, not to make it so we can continue in them!

9) Here John specifically states that God's "born-ones" cannot go on practicing sin as a habit of life. The reason, he says, is that God's seed abides in us (a real argument for eternal security here). For a believer to go on living in sin is impossible. Sure believers sin, but they repent and return to God. Notice Moses, David, Peter, and perhaps you!

10) The nature of the fruit tells us the nature of the tree. The source of spiritual parentage is no mysterious, secret thing. If you want to know, look at the life! Generally, those not doing right are not considered to be God's offspring. Specifically, the one who does not love his brother is outside God's family, still in the family of the evil one.

11), 12) The Apostle returns to one of his favorite themes - LOVE. This ancient message is an appeal to a primitive authority. It dates back to the gates of Eden, outside of which the attitude of hate turned into the action of murder. We are warned not to emulate Cain. He had his source in the Evil One, and Dr. Kenneth Wuest, the great teacher of New Testament Greek at Moody Bible Institute, says that Cain cut his brother's throat (learned from watching his father slay sacrificial animals). The reason he killed his brother was the moral contrast of their actions. The darkness tried to put out the light, even as it does today. Keep your light ever shining!

13) We are often amazed at the world's antagonism toward us. We really should not be surprised that the world hates us. Remember the words of Jesus, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first (John 15:18)." If we represent Him truly and faithfully to this world, we shall certainly arouse their opposition to Christ in ourselves.

14) Another ground of, basis for assurance is found here. As surely as he who hates is of the Devil, so we who love our brothers can **know** that we are born of God. Hatred is associated with death, and love, with life. Having passed from hatred to love is an indication of having passed from death unto life. Does this brother-love describe you?

15) Set in contrast here are love and hate, life and death. As lust is spiritual adultery, so hatred is the spiritual equivalent of murder. The one who has the love of Christ abiding in him cannot go on hating someone. Life in Christ and hatred are

mutually exclusive in any person. Let us be sure that our hearts are full of love and devoid of hate.

16) We are able to see love defined and demonstrated in Christ's sacrificial death for sinners. Instead of wishing harm to another because we hate him, we should, because of love, be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for them. Our command from heaven is to love, not hate! We are never more like Jesus than we express love to others.

17) While love may surely be seen in the supreme sacrifice, it may also be made known in the simple sacrifices of life, as well. Ministering to the material needs of hurting people is an evidence of the presence of love in our lives. Ministries like ours at the Rescue Mission can afford daily expressions of the love of Christ. Your life can be, too.

18) Here the gentle Apostle John joins with the sterner James in urging us to a faith that proves itself in works, not that just promotes itself in words. Words may be false, but deeds prove the truth. We must be willing to surrender that which has value for our own life to enrich the life of another. Strive for love in the heart and purity in the life.

19), 20) Assurance of our salvation has grounds both objective and subjective. Here John declares a subjective ground for knowing that we belong to God. Satan appeals to any weakness he finds in us, and there are times he tries to make us think we are not saved. Our weak hearts may on occasion fall prey to this tactic, but thankfully, God is greater than our weak hearts. He has made it clear that a life of showing love to others is the work of the Spirit in us (Galatians 5:22 - "the fruit of the Spirit is love..."), and such a life confirms His presence in us! I would rather trust the sure Word of God than place any confidence in my frail heart. I know I am saved!!!

21), 22) When what we **know from God's Word** rises above what we **feel in our vacillating hearts**, we can have a growing measure of confidence before Him. Hebrews 4:16 speaks of our drawing near the throne of grace with confidence. Here also, John relates spiritual confidence to the matter of prayer. Keeping this command of love is pleasing to God, and thereby we experience more effective prayer. Loving people as God requires of us puts us on praying ground, as well as helping us to be assured of our salvation. How important it is to love.

23), 24) Here is a summary conclusion of what has preceded. Joined inseparably together are believing, living, loving, obeying, and knowing. Assurance is a blessing the believer can enjoy, but it comes objectively by the residence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and subjectively by lives of loving obedience to His commands. Dear Listener or Reader, if you today lack assurance of your salvation, if you don't know with certainty that you are God's child, it's time to take stock of some things. Have you ever put your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ for your salvation, and are you doing your best with Holy Spirit help to obey God's command and love people?

1 John 4

1) Do you recall our opening statement on this epistle: *"2 John says 'reject false teachers;'" 3 John says 'receive true teachers;'* 1 John shows you how to tell the difference." The Bible is clear that there are many false teachers in this world. It speaks of their teaching as "doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). It seems that some of John's readers were accepting as true (believing) what some false teachers were propagating. His command here is to "stop believing every spirit." His second command is to "test them for authenticity" (whether they were from God or not). He is going to give us the test criteria, and please notice that it is about Jesus ("You cannot think right in the rest unless you think right in Him").

2), 3) This could be a statement of fact or a command - the grammar allows for either. In either case, we know we can (statement of fact) or must (command) discern the Spirit of God. A widespread heresy of John's day recognized the supernatural aspects of Christ's life and work, but they denied His true humanity. 2 John 7 repeats the existence of this heresy. So in this time the test for authenticity of a spirit was their acknowledgment of the humanity of Jesus. The incarnation is part of the "mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16). Those who reject the doctrine of the incarnation exhibit the "spirit of antichrist," the character who is to come, whose spirit exists in every age.

4) Emphasize here the word "you!" In contrast to the spirit of antichrist, YOU have your origin in God. And you have defeated the other spirits in that the Ones Who dwell in you (Father, Son, and Spirit) are greater than Satan, the one who dwells in the world. He is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), the "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). With all of that, God is greater, and He lives in you!

5), 6) What a vivid contrast John draws between us and them! The false teachers have their source in this ordered world-system, the "kosmos." It is from this world that they get what they say and teach, and so those of this world give them a hearing. "WE," in contrast to them, have our source in God; and those who share our source give us a hearing. But those not of God will not listen to us (O, how I wish they would!). Herein is the test to discern between the spirit of truth and that of error. Once again, know that if you saturate your mind and heart with the Word, you will much more easily spot error.

7) John calls readers "beloved ones." Then he urges them to demonstrate love to each other, with the love that comes from God (agape). This is an unselfish attitude of caring for another with no regard for self. The ability to love like this shows that a person has experienced the new birth, and that they know Him personally.

8) Scripture says that "God is Spirit," and that "God is light," and here that "God is love." Scripture's most famous verse, John 3:16, declares that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life." Those who cannot and will not express selflessness for the benefit of others do not know Him as Father. Love, then, becomes a test of membership in the family of God.

9) Love is not a feeling or an emotion; it is a decision to act on behalf of the one loved. John here agrees with Paul's statement in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." What an expression of love for us, that God would sacrifice heaven's best, His Son, Jesus, for sinners! And what an example for us to follow. And what an end result - "that we should live through Him!"

10) We are typically drawn to those whom we find attractive in some way - those who may be somewhat like us. That God

should be moved to love - to act unselfishly on behalf of - sinners, is an amazing thing. That love was shown when He gave Jesus to be a Sacrifice that would satisfy Him concerning our sins - a Propitiation!

11) God's example of love places an obligation upon us. It is that we should try to follow His pattern of love in the way we act towards each other. It is natural to be selfish and unloving. It is supernatural to look outside ourselves and work for the good of another - even if it means sacrificing something dear to us (as God did His own dear Son). I am compelled as a recipient of love to become a giver of love as well. This is obligatory, not optional.

12) The world needs an understanding of God. John had written in his gospel that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son...He hath revealed Him." So how can the world see God, then? Well, just as we saw God revealed in Christ and His great act and acts of love, so the world can see God in us if we are willing to set self aside for the good of others - which marvelous thing we call "love." God is shown when we love one another.

13) The issue of assurance is tied in with the subject of love. The one loving can know that there is the mutual abiding of the believer with God - that is, that he lives in God, and God lives in him. Love as a fruit of the Spirit is evidence of the Spirit's presence in the life, which presence brings assurance of a relationship with God. Not only does love show the world I belong to God, but it also assures me that I am rightly related to Him. "Blessed assurance...!"

14) In the opening verses of the epistle, John said he wanted to declare unto others that Christ Whom he had personally seen. Now this declaration is made complete. While John had seen Jesus in the flesh, we see Him with the eye of faith in the scriptures. This vision is reinforced when we view Christ at work producing love in the lives of the ones who belong to Him. Oh, that others might see Jesus in us as we love one another, too! What a witness!

15) The mutual abiding mentioned in vs 13 surfaces here again. That sense of the presence of God in our lives and the fact that we live and move in His presence are each spoken of. No deep formulas, no great spiritual achievements, no excessive price for life are required. A simple acknowledgment of the deity of Jesus Christ will do. Philip said to the Ethiopian, "If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, you may..." "I believe!" he said!

16) It is stated again that "God is love." That we are linked in union with Him is best seen, then, when men see us as loving, too. We can profess to know Him Who is very Love itself, only when we show that His love has affected our lives. The selfish, inward life cannot belong to those who belong to God. Concern, compassion, and care for others - even at expense to ourselves - is the best evidence that we are children of God. Show God thru love.

17) A final motivation to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the cultivation of love in our lives is the coming day of judgment. The Psalmist said the wicked would not be able to maintain themselves in that day. John here speaks of the believer having confidence in judgment. Here's how it works: in this world, God is the perfect expression of love. We are to be like Him, and when we love, we ARE like Him in this world. This we cannot do on our own. It is God's work in us, and it gives us confidence that we belong to Him! What blessing is produced by LOVE!

18) Slave-like, cringing, dread of God's judgment is incompatible with real love for God. Complete, mature, love throws fear out, expelling every trace of terror. To continue to live in dread is to show that one has an immature love.

19) Please omit the "Him" from the old version. The reality is that we are able to show love at all, not just to love God, because He loved us in the first place. His was the initial, the primary love. All other love flows from that love. I could not love my wife, my children, my grandchildren if God had not first loved me. He taught me how to love.

20) It is clear throughout Scripture that love for God and love for man are inextricably woven together. The two greatest commandments are about loving God and loving man. In fact, we have already seen in chapter 3 that loving people is how we show love to God. You cannot love the invisible God and hate the visible brother, His image.

21) Here is a grammatical anomaly - a singular word, "command," speaking of plural duties, "love God and love people." Here is the essence of the law's 2 tables. We cannot, must not dishonor the God we love, nor wrong the man we love.

1 John 5

1) Here are two issues surrounding two vital words, "faith" and "love." The 1st is that entrance into God's family by way of the new birth is contingent upon faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Secondly, children in the family should love the Father, and that love is also shared with other believers as well. My love for that brother is not based upon what I see in him, but upon the fact that we have the same Father. The believer's security is seen in the use here of the perfect tense of "born," signifying a final and irrevocable act of God. I cannot get "unborn!"

2) How can we know if this love for the brethren is a reality in us? Can we measure it by some rule? Can we weigh it on some scale? Can we pour it into a measuring cup to see if it is of adequate volume? We know that we love the brethren when we love God and obey Him. Obedience to Him requires acts of love toward them. The whole second table of the law is about this matter. And remember that Paul said love works no harm to its neighbor, and thereby fulfills the law of God. This obedience is not a single act, but a habit, a lifestyle that goes on and on.

3) John answers a second implied question here: "What does it mean to love God?" Certainly it's easy to profess love to God - people do that all the time. But do we really love God, and if so how can we know? John is so clear! He says that love for God is evidenced by obedience to God. And it is not a grudging, complaining obedience. It is rather joyful. When service and worship and giving and praying become a delight, then we know we love God.

4) It has been said that "the principle of victory resides in everyone born of God." And what is that principle? It is simply faith. Perhaps you recall as I do the gospel song from yesteryear reminding me that "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world." A defeated believer should be an extinct animal. John says that "everyone born of God overcomes the world." If you are not experiencing victory in your life, either you have not been born again, or your faith is dormant and you are spiritually ill. Let Dr. John diagnose and treat your problem today.

- 5) That we need "victory over the world" implies that the "kosmos" is our enemy. James had warned us that friendship with the world is enmity with God. John tells us that even the humblest, newest believer can be victorious. The only tool he prescribes in the battle is simple faith in Christ. Even in the Roman arena, facing martyrdom, the Christian who keeps his faith in Christ wins! To win is to be faithful to the end, not to stand over your enemy.
- 6) The Cerinthian heresy of John's day taught that the divine Christ joined the man Jesus when He was baptized, and that He left him before the crucifixion. John's description of the Christ that we must embrace by faith takes us from at least baptism through the cross, thus disputing the doctrine of Cerinthus. It may be that John was taking us from the birth of Christ to the cross, which would also refute the heresy. In any case, be reminded as we approach the season of Easter of the importance of the death of Christ. The Christ of the cross is the only solution to the problem of sin and the problems brought on by sin. If you do not know Him, please just trust Him as your Lord. If you do know Him, join us in making Him known to others who need Him so much.
- 7), 8) Those following the KJV will notice that our reading is briefer than your text calls for. All time will allow me to say here is that of the many existing manuscripts of the Greek text, the oldest ones are the briefer ones. Textual experts say that in conflicting copies, the shorter is preferred, because while copiers would fear to delete text, they might add a marginal note of explanation that a later copier would mistake as part of the body of text and copy in. No manuscript before 1550 has the omitted words. This does no harm to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is taught throughout Scripture. It is just not taught here. John says here that 3 bear witness: the Holy Spirit - remember the dove? He testifies to Jesus in Scripture. The Water - that is the voice of God at Christ's baptism. And the Blood - at the cross, glorious testimony to Christ's divine mission was seen. He is God!
- 9) In the various arenas of life we often act based on the testimony we receive from people. We make purchases, hire employees, call pastors, and even put people in jail based on testimony given by men. John says, "Since we do that, is it not reason to accept Divine testimony about the divinity of Christ?!" Indeed we should believe God
- 10) Have you ever heard someone say, "I just know it's true; I know it in my heart!" We may dismiss such as being too subjective, but there is a place for that. Romans 8:16 reminds us that the Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit in confirmation of our faith. It is a dangerous thing to question God's testimony about Jesus. That is the same as calling God a Liar. To disbelieve is to impugn God's truthfulness. It comes back to simple faith in God's Word.
- 11) Since 1961 I have called this my spiritual birth certificate. "This is the record..." In my home files I have birth records for my immediate family members. On occasion, these are required as proof of identity, such as when getting a passport to go to another land. Well, when it comes time to go to heaven's land, my records are all in order. Written in God's hand in the blood of His Son, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, I'm ready for departure. Are you?
- 12) Such great issues are dealt with here! Eternal life is a present possession. It is bound up in Jesus; to have Him is to have life. Do you have Jesus?" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."
- 13) Can we **know** that we are saved? Can we have absolute confidence that we are forgiven and bound for heaven? The answer is and emphatic "YES!" How sad that some go through life without assurance of their relationship to God through Christ. I thank God for a pastor, now with the Lord, who helped me from this very text KNOW that I was born again, a member of God's family, forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, and headed for heaven!
- 14), 15) When we are confident of our relationship to God, we have greater boldness in approaching Him in prayer. It is His delight to meet the needs of His children, and it delights Him when we pray. As we walk with God, we get to know Him through His Word. This enables us to pray according to His will. We are not fearfully coming to a grudging God, asking for things He doesn't want to give. George Mueller put it this way, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness." Our prayer is not an arrogant demand of God, but a confident request. He didn't spare Jesus, so we trust Him to freely give us all good and needful things.
- 16) There are illustrations in Scripture of sins leading to physical death. Nadab and Abihu died for offering strange fire on the altar. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram perished for challenging the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Uzzah was struck down for touching the Ark of the Covenant. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives for lying to the Holy Spirit. Some believers in Corinth died for missteps at the Lord's table (communion). Since we do not know what sins will lead to death, it is good for us to pray for any sinning brother. If they die, our prayers cease. It may be that like Jeremiah (7:16) and Joshua (7:10), God will lead us to stop praying for someone. But until then, intercessory prayer is a blessing for the body of Christ.
- 17) Sin is sin, even though some sins lead to physical death and others do not. Let us not minimize any "unrighteousness," for all of it "misses the mark" of God.
- 18) Those of us who are born again, born from above, born of God, must not and cannot habitually practice sin. I have lost the annotation, but someone said "Sin and the child of God may occasionally meet, but they cannot live together in harmony." The "keeping" mentioned here is either the believer keeping himself (protected) from sin by righteous living, or it is Christ keeping us, not only in the sense of security, but also in the sense of sanctification. When we are so kept, Satan cannot get a hold on us! See Luke 22:31-32 for a thought like this.
- 19) This "knowing" is not the word John normally uses for "experiential knowledge." It is rather the expression for "intuitive knowledge." As my grandson replied when asked as a child how he knew something, "It's just one of those things you know." Here we intuitively know that we have our source in God. The lost world of men find themselves greatly under the influence of Satan - but not us! Thank God.
- 20) We also intuitively know that Jesus has come, and that he has given us understanding (a "thorough mind"). The result of this is that we may "experientially know" Him Who is True - "You cannot think right in the rest unless you think right in

Him." Christ is in us (Colossians 1:27), and we are in Him - a sort of mutual abiding. Here is another strong statement of the deity of Jesus - "He is the true God and eternal life." Your faith in Jesus results in the possession of everlasting life (John 3:16).

21) John closes his letter with a term of endearment - "little children." He is the aged Apostle, nearing his exodus from life, and he thinks of the readers as his "little children." "Keep" is an imperative verb meaning to "guard yourselves" from idols. O, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let nothing come between you and the Savior. Make no idol of a material thing, of an activity, or even of a living person - mate, child, grandchild. Always let Jesus be number One in your life.