



1st John

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

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(Rev 2)

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THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN; AN INTRODUCTION.

The book of 1 John is the 62nd book of the Bible, and it is comprised of 5 chapters of 105 verses, the same number of verses as that of 1 Peter. A verse-per-day evaluation of 1 John will take just about three- and one-half months to complete.

John is the Apostle John who was personally called by Jesus. Matthew 4:21, 22 reveals his formal calling by the Lord –

“Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

John is held to be the author of the Gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation. He is highlighted in the gospels as being one of an inner circle who most closely associated with Jesus. This also included Peter and John’s brother, James. In the gospel which bears his name, he refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (for example, see John 13:23).

Based on the terminology of some verses in the gospels, it is speculated by some that John may actually be a first cousin of Jesus. However, this cannot be determined without a measure of speculation.

Like the book of Hebrews, no writer is specifically identified as being the author of 1 John. Extra-biblical writings, however, identify him as the author. These include Irenaeus, who lived approximately AD 140–203; Clement of Alexandria, who lived around AD 150–215; Tertullian who lived around AD 155–222; and Origen, who lived around 185–253. No other name is known to be assigned as the author, and so it is rather certain that he is the one.

In addition to these known early testimonies, comparing the style and content between the gospel of John and the epistle of 1 John provide us with sufficient evidence to be reasonably confident that the traditional idea of John being the author is correct. For example, the opening line of the gospel (John 1:1), and a second verse (John 1:14), match in terminology to the opening line of the epistle (1 John 1:1). From there, numerous other verses are also interestingly similar. One of the many examples would be –

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:36

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” 1 John 5:12

Detailed studies have been made, highlighting these similarities, and they provide great assurance that the same person, the Apostle John, authored both books. In addition, in the opening verses of the epistle, the author of 1 John personally speaks of having witnessed the things he writes of. From there, his writings testify to the truth of that claim.

The dating of the letter is reasonably assumed to be from the mid-80s to the mid-90s. Irenaeus makes this claim, but also some of the internal content of the letter – such as refuting the idea of Gnosticism, give hints to this dating. The content of the letter also suggests that it was written about the same time, or after, the gospel of John.

No specific recipients are named – either a specific church or location, or a specific individual. Therefore, it may have been intended as an encyclical letter passed out to various churches to either accompany the Gospel of John, or to confirm the authenticity of the Gospel which had been received earlier. The careful use of the similar content would help confirm that the Gospel was, in fact, authentic.

Another possibility for the writing of the letter would be as a refutation of the Gnostic idea of who Christ was, and how that affected the doctrine and conduct of believers. The letter would be a carefully penned addition to the presentation of Christ in the Gospel to ensure that no theological manipulation of the Gospel would arise. Such aberrant doctrines would lead to moral decay. 1 John will address this, it will address core tenets of understanding Christ, and it will address the concept of the security of believers in salvation.

The placement of the Gospel of John after the three synoptic gospels (which are addressed specifically to Israel, under the Law of Moses), and the placement of John's three epistles (which come after four letters directed specifically to the Hebrew people), both demonstrate a uniting of Jew and Gentile into one body. In both, the content is obviously directed to a body of believers without regard to such ethnicity but has content applicable to all people within the body. The very structure of the Bible provides insights into the nature of redemptive history.

The main theme of 1 John is “Fellowship.” Thus, the main purpose of the epistle is “To combat moral laxity and error about the Person and work of Jesus Christ.”

The main presentation of Christ in the epistle is “Jesus Christ, the Life.”

A short review of the book includes the following –

Author – The Apostle John

Date – Mid-80s to mid-90s

Theme – Fellowship

Purpose – To combat moral laxity and error about the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Presentation of Christ – The Life

A limited outline of the book would be –

The Book of 1 John – Light, Truth, and Love

Book Superstructure

Sure knowledge of the truth.

Book Structure

Prologue.

Purpose of letter.

Final greeting.

Book Outline

Jesus Christ, the Light of life.

Love for the brethren, not the world.

Abiding in Christ.

Proof of the Spirit’s indwelling.

Overcomers in Christ – the knowledge of the truth.

Life application: We hope that you will spend the next 105 days of your life learning the book of 1 John, one verse at a time. From there, we hope you will apply its truths to your life, molding yourself more each day into being a faithful and wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Lord God, may we, as believers in Christ Jesus, be faithful in studying Your word, accepting its truths as revealed in proper context, and then applying those truths to our walk with You. Help us to pursue Jesus Christ, our Life, Light, and Truth. Help us to pursue the Word made flesh as revealed in Your precious written word. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 1 John 1:1

To help grasp the structure of the first three verses of the epistle, the following comments from Vincent's Word Studies are provided –

“The construction of the first three verses is somewhat involved. It will be simplified by throwing it into three parts, represented respectively by 1 John 1:1, 1 John 1:2, 1 John 1:3. The first part, That which was from the beginning – Word of Life, forms a suspended clause, the verb being omitted for the time, and the course of the sentence being broken by 1 John 1:2, which forms a parenthesis: and the Life – manifested unto us. 1 John 1:3, in order to resume the broken sentence of 1 John 1:1, repeats in a condensed form two of the clauses in that verse, that which we have seen and heard, and furnishes the governing verb, we declare. Thus the simple sentence, divested of parenthesis and resumptive words would be, We declare unto you that which was from the beginning, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of Life.”

As in the Gospel of John, John immediately begins the epistle with a thought that extends to before the creation. The words, “That which was from the beginning,” demonstrate that there was a beginning. As there was a beginning, then that which was there from the beginning existed before “the beginning.” Existence cannot create itself, and therefore it is either created, or it is uncreated. If there was a beginning to something, then there is a time when it did not exist. Therefore, it was created. If it was created, then it was by the hands of the Creator. As the Creator has no beginning, He is uncreated.

John's words demonstrate, without any doubt, that the subject of his epistle – meaning “the Word of life,” who is Jesus Christ – is the eternal God. He is uncreated, and thus He is the Creator. However, rather than saying, “He whom,” John says, “That which.” John goes beyond the physical being of the Person of Jesus Christ into a realm which the mind cannot fully grasp. All that relates to God – His knowledge; His omnipotence; His wisdom; His mercy, goodness, and glory – these, and so much more, are what the neuter words “that which” are expressing. It is reminiscent of the words of the Lord to Moses on Mount Sinai –

“And God saith unto Moses, ‘I AM THAT WHICH I AM;’ He saith also, ‘Thus dost thou say to the sons of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.’” Exodus 3:14 (YLT)

The word “was,” as in “was from the beginning,” is the Greek *eimi*. It signifies being, or existence. It is saying, “That which” existed, not that it *egeneto*, or came into being. John’s words are penned so that no error in thinking will come about from an improper analysis of what is being conveyed.

Next, like John 1:1, there is no article before “beginning.” The Greek reads *ap’ arches*, and so rather than speaking of a concrete statement of being, it speaks of a state of being. Taken together with John 1:1, we have the following –

In the beginning was the Word
That which was from the beginning

It seems certain that John is assuming his audience is aware of his gospel. In the gospel he speaks of the Word “before” the creation, and here he speaks of “that which” was “from” that beginning, but which has already been defined as being before it. His existence was, and His existence continues. It was revealed within His creation. As John next says, “which we have heard.”

The words “have heard” are in the perfect tense. The words were heard, and they stand. What was communicated is, and it is fixed. The effects of the hearing continue on. However, there is more than just hearing, as of a prophet of old. The words were conveyed by a physical being. The only explanation for this is the incarnation. There is the preexistence of the word, uncreated and thus infinite. But there is also the Word “which we have seen.”

Again, the words “have seen” are in the perfect tense. The word was made manifest, and the effects of that coming continue on. Later in this epistle, John will write, “No one has seen God at any time.” Man cannot see the infinite God, and yet John speaks of having seen the Word. But did John and those with him merely see the word in a vision of the mind? No. He explicitly denies this thought with the continued words, “with our eyes.”

What was beheld was not a spiritual experience only, but it was one that was physically viewable with physical eyes. It is a confirmation that the Word “became flesh” (John 1:14). The story of the incarnation is confirmed by the words of John. He is showing, without a doubt, that God’s manifestation in the Person of Jesus Christ was not merely a

spiritual appearance, but one which was physical. They heard the Word, they saw the Word, and John next says, “which we have looked upon.”

The Greek signifies to behold. It is used of a spectator gazing intently upon something, as if in a theater. Here it is in the aorist tense. Rather than focusing on the abiding effects of what they beheld, he is noting the fact that it occurred and that they were given the special opportunity to witness these things. He and the others were able to gaze upon the things Christ Jesus did – healing, teaching, fulfilling prophecy, and even dying on the cross. They beheld this manifestation of the Word as He accomplished the work set before Him.

And then, yet again, John wants his reader to know that even this wasn't some type of mere vision. In order to do this, he confirms the physical nature of the Word by saying, “and our hands have handled.”

Again, it is in the aorist tense. The apostles were given the opportunity to interact with the Word, and to even touch Him. The word “handled” is the same as that used by Luke—

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” Luke 24:39

Hands cannot handle a vision or a dream. Hands cannot touch a spirit being. Rather, there was a physical nature to the Word. His hunger was real, His mourning was real, and His crucifixion was real. Further, after His crucifixion, His resurrection was in a real body. The fact that John doesn't mention this occurrence in His gospel, and yet he refers to it now, is a confirmation of the words of Luke.

The Word participated in all of these physical events, which extend even to a physical event – the resurrection – which now continues on forever in a physical body. Those things that occurred, as the Word interacted with the created order, truly happened.

All of this, and so much more, is revealed in the opening words of the epistle “concerning the Word of life.” In the Greek, there is an article before “life.” Thus, it reads “concerning the Word of the Life” (YLT). The words speak of the personal being who is Jesus Christ. This is perfectly evident when taken in conjunction with the Gospel of John which says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). It is also evident from the continued words of the epistle now before us.

It is He who is the Source and Author of life, and it is He who imparts new life to those who come to Him. Apart from Him, life cannot exist.

Life application: Among other reasons for what has been seen, this first verse was meant to dispel heresy which had already crept into the church, and which continues to this day. To diminish either aspect of Christ Jesus – that being fully God and that of being fully Man – is to fundamentally error in His nature, purpose, and ability to redeem.

John will continue to explain this, and He will build upon several key words such as the word, light, life, darkness, joy, etc., as he reveals to us the glory which is revealed in Jesus Christ. He will show us how we can and should properly interact with Jesus Christ as we continue our walk in this life.

Lord God Almighty – that You would step out of eternity and unite with human flesh is beyond comprehension. To imagine what occurred and what will be for eternity concerning the Person of Jesus Christ is astonishing. Though we cannot fully grasp these things, we accept them and will continue to contemplate them forever. Help us to always desire to look more and more into the mystery of Christ and Your glory which is revealed through Him. Amen.

...the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—

1 John 1:2

John, after introducing us to “the Word of life,” now begins a parenthetical thought beginning with, “the life was manifested.” Here, he is using the term “the life” in a manner almost synonymous with “the Word.”

Like at other times, it is expressing the nature of Christ. He is the Truth, He is the Light, He is the Way, etc. The words “the life” are no different here. The One who bears the meaning of “life” – in its fullest sense – was manifested, meaning made clear, or made known. He was plainly revealed in the coming of Christ.

This is analogous to what is said of Christ in John 1:14 which says, “And the Word became flesh.” The only difference is that a different characteristic of Christ is revealed in these words. In the gospel of John, He is the Word – the One who explains the Father to us, He is the Life – the One who reveals life itself to us, and so forth. The various

terms are given to help explain these natures so that we can come to a fuller understanding of who Christ is.

John then repeats the same idea that he said in verse 1, “and we have seen.” “That which was from the beginning” was seen. “That which” was the Word from John 1:1, but it is also the Life. The apostles had seen the very source of life itself – with their own eyes. He was manifest unto them not as a secret enlightenment for a select few, but as a means of conveying the truth of God to the world. For this reason, John says they “bear witness.”

In John 1:7, John the Baptist came “to bear witness of the Light.” The One who would draw all peoples to Himself as a beacon through His death, as noted in John 12:32, is also the One who would come to give life. Certain people were selected to bear witness to these things. There would be an experiential knowledge which would lead to a personal testimony, and that would lead to the proclamation of the gospel.

Understanding this, John then says that he and the others who had seen these things now “declare to you that eternal life.” The Greek is much more precise, stating, “the life, the eternal.” The apostles declared the Life. It is He who is the Life, and it is He who provides eternal life. There is a development of thought being presented.

Adam was created to live and not die. But through sin, death entered the world. In the doing of the law, man was promised to live (Leviticus 18:5). But fallen man is incapable of fulfilling the law. However, Christ, the Life, was capable of doing so. In His fulfillment of the law, He could provide that eternal life for man by removing the law, taking it out of the way, and thus bringing eternal life.

The process requires more than the words of John to understand. Indeed, it takes all of Scripture to grasp what God has done in Christ, but John’s words make the simple proclamation that it is so. This is the declaration of the life, the eternal life “which was with the Father.”

In saying that the Life was with the Father, it is saying that He is prior to the creation. The same Life that was with the Father, apart from any created thing, is the Life that was manifested to the world in Christ. They are not two, but one. This is confirmed by Jesus’ own words, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).

The Father expresses Himself in and through the Son. The life that is in the Father is the Life who came to dwell among the people He created. It is this Life that John says, “was

manifested to us.” This Life – which has always been, but which has not been seen in man since the fall of Adam – is what was presented to the world. Christ came to perform a mission which was to restore life to man and to thus reclaim man for the Father in the state which He was originally intended to exist.

Of this, Vincent’s word studies states –

“In living, active relation and communion with the Father. ‘The preposition of motion with the verb of repose involves eternity of relation with activity and life’ (Coleridge). The life eternally tended to the Father, even as it emanated from Him. It came forth from Him and was manifested to men, but to the end that it might take men into itself and unite them with the Father. The manifestation of life to men was a revelation of life, as, first of all and beyond all, centering in God. Hence, though life, abstractly, returns to God, as it proceeds from God, it returns bearing the redeemed world in its bosom. The complete divine ideal of life includes impartation, but impartation with a view to the practical development of all that receives it with reference to God as its vivifying, impelling, regulating, and inspiring center.”

Life application: When reading John’s gospel and epistles, it’s hard not to get the sense that he simply couldn’t believe the blessing of encountering Jesus Christ, the Son of God. His words overflow with amazement at the immensity of what he had personally experienced.

From eternity past, the Word existed. But John exclaims that he and others saw the Word, looked upon the Word, handled the Word – all evidences of the incarnation. This is the life that was manifested to him and those he walked with. He again says, “we have seen” the Word. It is as if he is saying, “It’s really true and my words are insufficient to explain; let me repeat myself in an attempt to do so.”

Because of the absolute surety the apostles held concerning their eyewitness, John says that they bear witness, and declare what they had seen. One can imagine him going to bed, night after night, and saying, “These eyes beheld the Lord; my own two eyes.” When waking up in the morning, he probably repeated himself, “My own two eyes....” And so, he proclaims what he saw – that the eternal life which was with the Father became flesh and dwelt among the sons of men. It is this Life – this bridge between the finite and the infinite – which was manifested to a select group of people who would tell the story of eternal life to a world stained by sin and by darkness.

John will continue to weave together his words in a way which will detail the work of the Word, the significance of the Word, and the love of God as displayed in the Word. All of this was done to give eternal life to anyone who would but believe. Take time to think about the eternal Word of life, coming in human flesh to reveal the heart of the Father.

Surely no greater story has ever been told than that which details the life and work of Jesus Christ. O God, thank You for allowing our eyes to see Jesus in the pages of the Holy Bible. In seeing Him, we see You. May we faithfully study the words You have provided, and may our doctrine be pure as we pursue an understanding of His work and His glory. Amen.

...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3

With the parenthetical thought of verse 2 complete, John returns to the thought which began in verse 1 by saying, “that which we have seen and heard.” In this, he reverses the thought of verse 1-

Verse 1 – That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes

Verse 3 – that which we have seen and heard

The restatement of the thought is to solidify the fact in our minds that this really happened, and that their testimony is reliable. What the eyes have seen, the ears also heard. There is no disconnect between the two, as if there was a delusional vision. Rather the senses were united in what occurred.

John leaves out the words “and our hands have handled” from verse 1. In this, the mind must insert that thought, which is actually an effective way of having someone mentally remember that point as well. If someone said, “John is tall, handsome, and rich,” and then a minute later said, “John is handsome and tall,” the mind would reach back to retrieve the third thought by itself.

In leaving out “and our hands have handled,” and in that now being called to memory in this way, John continues with, “we declare to you.” This, once again, takes us back to the post-resurrection occurrence which was cited in the commentary of verse 1 from Luke 24. After revealing Himself to the apostles, John’s gospel takes up the narrative –

“Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” ²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed.”
John 20:24-29

The apostles had handled Christ, but Thomas was not with Him. Later, Thomas was there, and he too saw Him, speak to Him, and touch Him. It is this final proof, added to all of the times they had previously been with Him, that assured them concerning the Word of life. The apostles, through John’s words now, declare that life, as he says, so “that you also may have fellowship with us.”

The testimony of the apostles was given, but it is only a testimony. There must be an acceptance that what is presented is true. In accepting that, the blessed state of fellowship is realized – not just in understanding, but in full possession. This is the reason for John’s repetition of thought from verse 1. He understands that faith must be involved. Jesus said as much, and so he is giving the surest testimony he can so that it can come about.

In receiving their words, there is, as he says, “fellowship with us.” But in their fellowship already exists a higher fellowship which will likewise be granted to those who, by faith, accept their words. Of this, John says, “and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The Greek has an article before fellowship which, if included in the English, would make the translation cumbersome, but it is important to see – “indeed, the fellowship now, the of us, is with the Father and with the Son of Him – Jesus Christ.” John is providing emphasis in showing that the fellowship which exists – which they have and possess – is not just among one another, but it is inclusive of both the Father and the Son. It is the distinctive characteristic which belongs to true believers.

There is a harmony which is – right now and always – realized in this communion. Further, John carefully repeats the preposition *meta*, or “with,” before both “Father” and “Son” – with the Father and with the Son. In this, he is clearly and unambiguously showing that the two are separate entities within the Godhead who are both involved in the fellowship which exists among believers.

Life application: Despite the unclear, or purposefully twisted, thinking of cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Bible clearly proclaims the Godhood and Manhood of Jesus Christ. Here John is addressing the Gnostic belief that Jesus wasn’t truly a man, but was rather a spirit being. His proclamation could not be any clearer. This is similar to the gospels which relate that they physically handled and also ate with Jesus. The writing is purposeful, and it is meant to make explicit the physical nature of the risen Christ – something various cults, incredibly, still deny.

It is this incarnation which allows the fellowship described in today’s verse. Without a complete understanding of Jesus, we can never truly understand God the Father. But, because of Christ’s coming, we have the surety that our fellowship with them is real, and in turn our fellowship among other believers is both sound and worth pursuing. Unlike other relationships, that of Christian fellowship should be on an entirely different level because of the work of Jesus.

Lord Jesus, You are the tie that binds – You tie us to a sound understanding of God the Father; You tie us to eternal fellowship with the Holy Spirit; and You tie us together as friends in the fellowship of believers. Because of You, our fellowship is complete. Thank You for what You have done to unite us! Amen.

And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 1 John 1:4

The words here are closely aligned with Jesus’ words of John 15:11 –

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.”

John, having recently written his gospel, is aligning the thoughts of it and of this epistle together to form a better understanding of what is being conveyed, and it is certainly a way of helping his audience remember what was presented there as well. The submission of the letter, taken together with the gospel narrative, would then form a united whole. If this is what occurred, the two form a unique transmission of detail concerning the Person and work of Christ.

Whether this is the case, or whether they were sent separately, John's words here are perfectly consistent with the gospel, and they demonstrate that what Jesus said to the disciples is now intended by John to be realized in those who later read his letter as well as his gospel. Understanding this, he begins with, "And these things we write to you."

This immediately speaks of what he has said in the first three verses. What has been presented so far is reliable, it is confirmed by certain testimony, and it deals with the very Creator of all things in relation to His manifestation in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The words also are certainly inclusive of the entire epistle. As this is so, and as the words of the epistle often carefully and intricately align with the gospel narrative, that too must be considered as a part of what will bring full joy. And again, as that is so, and as the gospel narrative aligns harmoniously with the rest of Scripture, showing that Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of everything prophesied and anticipated in advance, the entire body of Scripture is implicitly included in that which will bring forth what John speaks of here. And that is, "that your joy may be full."

Some texts say "our" instead of "your." The difference then would be that the joy Jesus promised to the disciples in John 15 would only be fully complete when the message of Him was properly, accurately, and fully transmitted by them. This was their task, and in expressing the gospel, they would receive the fulness of the joy that Jesus spoke of. Another option is that it could be John including himself and the other apostles in with his audience in one message of joy being realized for all as their message is received and accepted.

Either way, the extension of the joy to the reader is obvious. There is to be a fulness of joy in understanding that God Himself has taken such minute interest in His creatures and has come to reveal Himself to us as He did. In reading, meditating on, assimilating, and living by what is presented in Scripture, the joy of God which is found in Jesus Christ can be ours – in its fulness. What a testimony to our need to be in the word always.

Life application: In the book of 1 John, we are given seven reasons for the things he writes –

- 1) that our joy may be full;
- 2) that we might not sin;
- 3) to share the commandments of the faith;
- 4) because our sins are forgiven in Jesus' name;
- 5) because we know Jesus – who was from the beginning;

- 6) because we have overcome the wicked one; and
- 7) because we know the Father.

All of these carefully weave together into one major reason – the first given – that our joy may be full. Think it through...

- 1) If we don't sin, we are living rightly in God's presence and are freed from condemnation and/or judgment – a true joy.
- 2) If we receive the commandments and accept them, we will be following the instruction our Creator has given. This instruction is for our benefit, not ill. Therefore, when we receive them and follow them, it is a true joy.
- 3) The fact that our sins are forgiven in Jesus' name means that we are granted eternal life. The wages of sin is death; therefore, if we are now sinless in God's sight, we receive eternal life – a true joy.
- 4) Knowing Jesus means knowing the Creator. He "was from the beginning." As there can only be one Creator and everything else is contingent and temporary, then Jesus Christ must be the eternal Word of God – the means of creation. Therefore, to know Him is to know true joy.
- 5) Overcoming the wicked one is something mankind has waited for since expulsion from Eden. Restoration between us and our Creator was impossible until Jesus came. But through Him we have that restoration. This, in turn, opens the doors to a restored paradise – this is true joy.
- 6) Knowing the Father is to know the Source. He is the One we look forward to with anticipation – ever straining our human hearts in hopes of knowing Him. Jesus reveals to us the Father because He and the Father are One. Through Jesus, we have the full revelation of who God is and are restored to eternal felicity and intimacy with Him – our joy is full.

Praise be to God for what He has done in the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Truly in knowing the Bible which tells us of Jesus, we can then know Jesus. And in knowing Jesus, we can know the very heart of our Creator, and we have attained joy to its fullness!

Simply unimaginable! What a glorious honor to be called a child of the Living God because of what Jesus did on our behalf. There is no greater joy to be obtained in all of creation than the restored relationship we now possess! We look forward to the Day when our faith will become sight and our eyes will behold the beauty of the Lord forever! Amen.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5

John now introduces the subject of light, and he contrasts it to darkness. It is a theme he also brought quickly into his gospel –

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:4, 5

With this in mind, John now builds upon his words of verse 3 which said, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you.” After saying that, he then noted that in his declaration there might be fellowship, and in that fellowship, there might be full joy. Now, he reveals what is to be declared by saying, “This is the message which we have heard.”

The declaration does not belong to John or any other apostles as the originating source. Rather, the message is one which was communicated to them. Next, he says, “from Him.” The entire thought is that it points to the Source of the message. It is not something that they heard by an intermediate. And any other apostle who declared the message likewise received what is to be said directly from the Source as well. It is this that John now says, “and declare to you.”

What he began in verse 3 is now to be relayed. John has taken his time to get to this point in order to establish that it is of the highest importance to him, and that is especially so because it comes from, and deals with, the Creator Himself. And that thought is “that God is light.”

Light is a real thing. It is something that comes from somewhere and transmits out from that source. However, in the case of God, the two are united as one. Unlike a light bulb (which merely sends forth light), and unlike the sun (which only sends forth light), John says, “God is light.” It is His absolute nature.

But there is more to the thought than just the fact of physical light being relayed. In Genesis 1:4, light is associated with goodness. Therefore, this is telling us that God is perfectly good in His being. There is no evil at all – no malice, no hatred, etc. He is perfectly, wholly, and absolutely defined by light. This is fully substantiated by the next words from John, “and in Him is no darkness at all.”

The psalmist declared this under inspiration (he declared what he received) –

“Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great:
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
² Who cover *Yourself* with light as *with* a garment,
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.” Psalm 104:1, 2

This notion of the dazzling brightness of God is found elsewhere in the Old Testament as well. Thus, the absolute moral purity of God is spoken of. Unlike the deities of other nations and peoples who were angry, vindictive, dark, and unholy, the Lord God is light, and He is morally perfect. Along with this comes the ideas of intellectual perfection, absolute truth, and so on. Everything that is good in the absolute sense is found in God. This is the declaration that John proclaims, and it is that which is then a source of fellowship, and in that fellowship is found joy in its fullness.

The reason for this will be explained in the verses to come, but the idea of why it is so was already seen in John 1:4, 5 (cited above), and it continues throughout his gospel. Again and again, the light is proclaimed about the nature of the Person of Jesus Christ. In John 8:12 (and again in John 9:5) He says explicitly, “I am the light of the world.” In John 12:46, He says, “I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

This is the message, and this is the declaration. Only in Christ can fellowship with the Father be obtained, because only in Him is the perfect moral purity to allow such to take place. But in coming to Christ, the moral purity of Christ is imparted to the believer. And in that impartation comes full, final, and forever fellowship with God.

Life application: To understand more fully what is brought forth by John, we can take a short trip back to 1 Timothy 6:13-16 –

“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

As Jesus Christ came from God, He is God. In His deity, He is the same essence being referred to by John. But when we see Jesus in His humanity, He is concealing the glory

of God; veiling it in human flesh for our benefit. There is no darkness at all in God, but only light.

In Jesus is the light of God. He reveals to us the fullness of the Godhead, and only through Him can we understand who God is in an intimate way. Apart from the created order, which reveals God in a general sense, we are left with no intimacy unless we know Jesus. And it is through the Bible that we learn about Him. Please! Take time each day to read your Bible.

Heavenly Father, we ask that You open our eyes to the truth of Your written word – the word that directs us to Jesus who, in turn, reveals You to us in an intimate way. We long to know You more fully, so be with us and guide us as we study Your precious word! Amen.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 1 John 1:6

John now combines the thoughts of verses 3 and 4 with that of verse 5. He spoke of fellowship in verse 4 and then of light as opposed to darkness in verse 5. Now, he begins with, “If we say.” This is his way of introducing a thought concerning any person or group of people. The thought would even include himself if the statement he is about to make was true concerning himself.

The words are in the subjunctive mood and thus it is a supposed thing, not something that actually is the case. If this is so, then this is the result: Therefore, if he or anyone else were to say, “we have fellowship with Him.”

This is the reintroduction of verses 3 and 4. The fellowship is “with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” It is then stated in verse 5 that the subject is “God.” Thus, the implication is that both the Father and the Son are God. The hypothetical person or group that John is referring to says that there is fellowship between them and God. However, they “walk in darkness.”

Here, the word “walk” means “to walk around” as in a full circle. It signifies the standard and continued walk of a person. Thus, it is the moral conduct of the person at any given time.

John has just said in verse 5 “that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” There is now an obvious disconnect between that statement, and the claim which is made. How

can light and darkness be in fellowship? The two are in complete opposition to one another, and yet the person who is walking in darkness says that he has fellowship with God. Such cannot be the case. In this, John says that “we lie and do not practice the truth.”

The statement that “God is light,” as noted in the previous verse, is to be taken as a statement of fact, but it also signifies moral purity, truth, righteousness, and etc. It is anything which reflects the absolutely holy nature of God. The “darkness” is that which is impure, unholy, defiled, and etc. It is a corrupt moral state. John shows that the two are opposed, It is a lie which is spoken forth, and the person who speaks it knows that it is so.

This does not, and it cannot, mean that a person who does something wrong or who sins is specifically referred to here. This is because verse 8 will show that everyone has sinned. However, the truth that Paul states is that those who are in Christ Jesus are not imputed sin (2 Corinthians 5:19).. With this understanding, John will continue his thought in the coming verses.

Life application: The first time darkness is mentioned in the Bible is right at the beginning, in Genesis 1:2, where darkness was over the face of the deep. At that point, there was only formless void and chaos. But God brought order out of it and established His creation – including the creation of man. However, man rebelled against God and died spiritually at that moment. Since then, man has been born physically alive but also spiritually dead; we pursue the things of the world, but not the things of God.

Our great need is to be born again, this time from above. As Jesus said in Matthew 6 –

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” Matthew 6:22, 23

Just prior to saying this, and then just afterward, He spoke of worldly treasure and money. These and other things keep our eyes fixed on the things of the world and its system instead of on the things of God. Because of this, we remain spiritually dead and at enmity with God.

This is the case with many professing Christians as well, but John says that if we walk in darkness we are lying, regardless of whether we say we have the light or not. All people

need to evaluate their conduct and determine if they are truly in Christ or if they are only paying lip service to Him in hopes of worldly gain.

Once we have called on Jesus in spirit and in truth, then we need to continue to fix our eyes on Him, lest we get sidetracked and pulled back into the world. We won't lose our salvation if this happens, but we will surely lose our joy.

Heavenly Father, give us wisdom to pursue the light of life and not the darkness of this world. Help us to keep our eyes directed on that which is eternal. Keep us from being distracted by the prospects of temporary wealth, fame, power, or any other thing which can never truly satisfy. Help us always to keep our eyes and our hearts directed toward the Lord Jesus. Amen.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

John now enters into a set of verses which are a continuous thought. They should not be taken individually without maintaining the context when cited. When that is done, doctrine which is completely unintended may arise. By first putting verses 1:6 and 1:7 side by side, what is said now will be more easily understood –

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Back in verses 1:3 and 1:5, John spoke of declaring the message of Christ. It is through accepting this message that fellowship is obtained. He said that “in Him there is no darkness at all.” One must consider any light source. There are always imperfections in it. The sun, for example, produces light, but the sun also has dark spots. This will be true of anything which is of the created order. But in God, there is only light – pure and completely undefiled. The light is being equated to absolute moral purity.

John now says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light.” Absolute moral perfection is the standard. But humans are incapable of such a state. And so how can a person “have fellowship with Him,” meaning God? And how can we walk in the light of God? Amos asked the question centuries before the coming of Christ –

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Amos 3:3

The question demands a negative reply – “No, they cannot.” There must be an agreement for such a walk. Without such an agreement, there is only walking in darkness. This is reflected in the words found in Proverbs 4 –

“But the path of the just *is* like the shining sun,
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

¹⁹ The way of the wicked *is* like darkness;
They do not know what makes them stumble.” Proverbs 4:17, 18

John next says that if such a walk is realized, then “we have fellowship with one another.” Scholars are generally in agreement that this is speaking of fellowship between believers, not the fellowship which is between the believer and God. That fellowship is here defined by walking together. In walking together, fellowship is also realized between other believers who are on this same walk.

Therefore, this excludes the theology where one cult, sect, or denomination of Christianity is in fellowship and others are excluded. It is not based on what is of human institution or origin, but of walking with God, that the fellowship is realized. It is through a walk with God, who is Light, that this is made possible. But if man is imperfect and God is perfect, then how can such a walk of agreement come about? The answer is found in the final words of the verse. John says, “and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

This phrase is not unlike that which is stated in Hebrews 9 –

“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”
Hebrews 9:13, 14

It is through Christ that such a walk is made possible. His sacrificial death continually cleanses the one who has put faith in him. It should be noted that the word “walk” in this verse is present subjunctive active. It is happening, it is in a type of conditional statement (if by chance), and it is ongoing – “But if we walk in the light.” Christ makes this possible. He has cleansed us, and He continues to do so.

There is a difference between being forgiven (coming in verse 9) and being cleansed. In one there is the judicial act of forgiveness. It is that which brings us to union with God in

Christ. In the other, there is the ongoing cleansing from sins as we continue in Christ. This is found in Paul's words of 2 Corinthians 5:19. The believer is no longer imputed sin. Thus, the sin is cleansed, and the guilt of the act is taken away.

The term "the blood" here speaks of everything associated with the Person and work of Christ. He came in a human body, and thus it speaks of his humanity. In his humanity, he suffered. Thus, "the blood" speaks of that. And Christ was crucified and died. Thus, "the blood" speaks of that. The death of Christ is what is transferred to the believer who then dies to the law, by which is the knowledge of sin. The person moves to Christ, and he is now "in Christ." In this state, he can – and forever after does – walk with God; in His light.

Life application: In this verse, John says "But." But if we walk in the light, meaning to have fellowship with God just as Jesus does, then we also walk in fellowship with one another. We simply cannot claim to be walking with God but not walking with Jesus Christ, who is God.

People who reject Jesus' deity cannot be walking in the light of God. If we acknowledge Jesus and walk in His light, then we also have fellowship with other Christians who are like-minded in accepting the incarnation. How important it is to understand who Jesus is! If someone denies what is clearly presented in Scripture concerning Him, he remains in darkness and his sin remains. But when one calls on Jesus as Lord, declaring Him truly God, then fellowship with other believers is established and Jesus' blood cleanses them.

Again, as is proclaimed throughout the New Testament, eternal salvation is clearly presented. Jesus saves us and continues to save us – despite ourselves. He is a mighty Savior and fully able to keep us from even our own weaknesses and failings. As you can see, John ties fellowship with God in with fellowship with Jesus and, in turn, fellowship with other believers. We are united into one holy temple.

Because of this, we should endeavor to lay aside any bitterness or infighting which is unproductive. Matters of doctrine need to be addressed and resolved, but lesser issues need to be set aside to maintain the bond of fellowship which unites us in Jesus.

Lord Jesus, give us wisdom to walk in Your glorious light and to pursue the knowledge of who You are and what You have done for us. Give us the ability also to fellowship with other believers in a manner which will be pleasing to You. Help us also to put aside petty differences and unite in the common goal of sharing Your good news. Amen.

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

1 John 1:8

John just said that in walking in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. As noted then, there is a difference between being forgiven and being cleansed. Through belief in Christ, man is forgiven of his sin. Further, the person forgiven by Christ, and who is now “in Christ,” is no longer imputed sin. However, there is still the fact that we have committed sin, and we continue to commit sin. John is actually dealing with both of these issues here. First, he says, “If we say that we have no sin.” A person may claim he is without sin, and he therefore does not need a Savior. Such a person denies that he has offended God through his actions, and he demonstrates that he believes he is morally pure enough to stand before God and be accepted for the life he has lived. John is speaking of such a person.

But his words go further. His words are inclusive of himself because he says, “we have.” It is true of all people. Further, it is a present verb, active voice, in the Greek. It speaks of those who are engaged in their walk at the present time. John’s words need to be taken as an all-inclusive statement. We have sinned and we continue to sin. If we say that this is not true, “we deceive ourselves.”

Here, the Greek literally reads, “we lead ourselves astray.” Whether ignorantly, or willfully, the person who says that “I do not have sin” is deluded. He has gone astray, walking onto the wrong path of deception. Further, the word “ourselves” is in the emphatic position, and it shows that people like this are not innocent victims, but have taken a lead role in deceiving themselves. Such a person calls into question the truth of God which says that “all have sinned.” It denies the need for a Savior, and it also means that even if a person acknowledges he has sinned, he can still – at some point – attain perfection and righteousness apart from the work of Christ.

But Christ is our Mediator. If we have attained sinlessness, we no longer need a Mediator. With such an attitude, John says that “the truth is not in us.” Paul says that in Christ, God is no longer imputing sins to us. The implication is that we have sin, but that God has been gracious to no longer count those sins against us.

To deny that we have sin, is to deny the goodness of God toward us in not imputing us our sins. It diminishes the work of Christ, and it brings the problem of sin in man to possibly meaning he only needs atonement for inherited sin, but not committed sin. But inherited, sin naturally and surely, leads to committed sin. Any person who is old

enough and competent enough to say, “I have no sin,” is also old enough and competent enough to know that this is not true.

God is due the glory that He demonstrates towards us in His grace and mercy. To deny our sin is to deny God this rightful due.

Life application: A false teaching among some denominations is the attainment of a sinless state in this life – Wesleyan Holiness and 7th Day Adventists, among others, believe this. When confronted with this verse, they will say this is referring to our sinful state before salvation, but that once saved, we can grow in the Holy Spirit (Holiness doctrine) to a point where we can be sinless.

This is incorrect and causes detriment to congregants, because tied in with this theology is the belief that one can lose his salvation by committing sins. This type of thinking leads to bondage never intended by the New Testament writers who spoke on behalf of the risen Lord.

Think of the consequences as you contemplate this. A pastor (or the denominational teaching) explains to followers that they can become sinless. This implies that they themselves may have attained this state and are thus beyond the grasp of sin. When a congregant falls into error, the pastor (who believes himself sinless) can point to the congregant as an example of one who has lost his salvation. Suddenly human neurosis takes over this individual, and he becomes willing to do anything to “regain his salvation.” He is now in bondage to the whims of the leader or sect, living in fear of any misstep and never having the very assurance of salvation which is so clearly demonstrated in the Bible.

Because of his failure to understand the grace of God imparted at the cross of Jesus, he also fails to notice the hypocritical position of the very person who has incorrectly counseled him – a person who is no more sinless than any other person, and who is actually self-deceived.

The Bible is very clear on this point, we cannot attain a sinless state in this life, nor can we lose our salvation. Both of these doctrines lead to error and bondage. Hold fast to the grace imparted to you at the cross.

Thank You, O God, for Your wonderful grace! May we trust in Your grace to carry us through to eternal life despite ourselves, and despite our many failings. May we never be so arrogant as to assume that we have become sinless in this life. Rather, we remain

dependent on Your mercy, Your abundant love, and Your promised guarantee to hold us securely in Your salvation once we have called out to Jesus. Amen.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

In the previous verse, John said, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” There the word is in the singular. It is speaking of the state of man in a general sense. Now John says, “If we confess our sins.”

This verse, 1 John 1:9, is strategically placed between two antithetical proclamations –

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” 1 John 1:8-10

The premise of coming to Christ is that a person is acknowledging he is a sinner. There is no other need to call on Christ. Thus, a person who does so is admitting he has sin – exactly as 1 Corinthians 15 states. Paul says in his description of the gospel “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” In believing the gospel, we are confessing our sins, and in doing so, “He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins.”

The state of man is one where he is born into original sin, and as soon as he is old enough to think, he begins to sin in his mind (lust, coveting, etc) and then in his actions (lying, stealing, etc). This state of sin forms a wall of separation between us and God. However, in believing the gospel, meaning that Christ died for our sins, we are acknowledging this state and believing that God sent the remedy for it. In our belief and acceptance of this message, God faithfully and righteously grants us forgiveness for our sins – all of them.

From there, John says that He does this, but in His righteousness, He will also “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This is the state into which the believer is brought. God judicially declares man to be free of the guilt of sin, but he also cleanses us from the stain of that sin. This continues forever due to the non-imputation of further sin as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:19.

In Christ, the believer is forgiven and cleansed. However, though not imputed sin, we still err while in these bodies, and we need ongoing cleansing from our sin for right

fellowship with God. We have sinned, we continue to sin, but Christ has forgiven us, and Christ continues to cleanse us. This is the marvel of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Life application: We can compare 1 John 1:9 with other verses in the Bible. Here are two of numerous verses that state we have been forgiven in Christ –

“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” 2 Peter 1:9

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”
Colossians 2:13

Therefore, what John is speaking about in this verse is the complete forgiveness which comes at the moment of confession of Jesus as Lord, and an acknowledgment of our inability to save ourselves. The moment we do this, we are forgiven for all sins – past, present, and future.

We cannot look at this verse as an indication that a saved believer will remain unforgiven if he doesn’t acknowledge a sin after coming to Christ. Having said this, it is wholly appropriate to continue to confess our sins after salvation and to ask continued forgiveness, even though it is already granted. Our health, relationships, and general life can suffer from a lack of confession and a generally unrepentant attitude, even if our salvation remains unaffected.

Remember to have balance in your walk with the Lord, understanding that we are saved despite ourselves, but we should never flaunt our salvation and treat it as license to live in sin, thus bringing discredit upon His name. Continued confession and repentance are signs of a healthy spiritual life in Christ.

Heavenly Father! We thank You for the eternal forgiveness we were granted when Jesus first came into our lives. Because of His magnificent work, give us wisdom to remember to call on Him in repentance as we fail Him in our daily walk. We know that through this, we will be sound, responsible, and effective witnesses for Him each day. Amen.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
1 John 1:10

Here we have the second verse which is set out as a contrast to verse 1:9 (the other is 1:8). All three together read –

- If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1:8)
- If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1:9)
- If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1:10)

Now, by taking 1:8 and 1:10 and putting them side by side, the two can be more fully understood –

- If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1:8)
- If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1:10)

The words, “we have no sin,” speak of the state of the individual. It denies original sin, and it denies committed sin. The words, “we have not sinned,” deny any wrong moral actions of the individual.

The words, “we deceive ourselves,” speak of the supposed morally exalted state of the individual (reaching upward). The words, “we make Him a liar,” speak of diminishing the truth of God (pulling downward).

The words, “the truth is not in us,” are connected to the self-deception and speak of our own moral failing. The words, “His word is not in us,” are connected to the utterance of God which we have called into question and show that there is no connection to God because His word is truth.

This then ties into the purpose of Christ’s coming, which is to free man from the bondage of sin which he is bound with. That is why verse 1:9 is given between these two verses. The problem rests in us while the cure rests with God. As he said, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Therefore, the Bible presents it as fact that we have sin, that we have sinned, that when we deny this – or unless we confess our sinful state to correct it – we both deceive

ourselves and we also call God a liar. In such a state, we continue in our state of moral failing, and we deny the only path to restoration with God, which is revealed in His word. Again, to understand John's words, one must understand the gospel as stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 –

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4

The word says that “Christ died for our sins.” If we say we have no sin, and that we have not sinned, then we both deceive ourselves and we call God a liar. But God cannot lie. Therefore, the truth is not in us and His word is not in us – because God's word, which comes from God who cannot lie, says that we have sinned, and that Christ died for our sins.

The gospel cannot be realized in a person who has not confessed his sin. But by saying, “I believe Christ died for my sin,” it is acknowledging that the person does have sin and has sinned. In this confession, God “is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Life application: John is not just rambling and arbitrarily making arbitrary statements which have no logical cohesion. Rather, he is methodically making statements which must be taken in the full context of his letter. In understanding John's words, there is the inescapable truth that we either will come to Jesus and be saved, or we will continue to deceive ourselves, continue to call into question God's word, and remain in a state of condemnation. The choice is left up to us, but the remedy has already been provided by God if we so choose to accept it.

Lord God, may the people of this world receive the truth of Your simple gospel message. You have said that Christ died for our sins. This, then, implies that we have sinned. If we confess this fact, believing that He gave His life for our moral failings, then Your word says that You are faithful and just to forgive us of those sins, and to then cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Help us to be wise and to accept this simple message of hope and reconciliation – to Your glory we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

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. 1 John 2:1

John begins Chapter 2 with, “My little children.” This loving way of speaking will be used quite a few times in this one epistle when he says either “My little children,” or simply “little children.”

By this time in his life, he was an aged man. It would thus be natural, as a father to his children, to address them in this personal way. Further, the word “little” is certainly included to show an even stronger bond than simply saying, “My children.” He is talking to them as if they were too young to protect themselves, and so he is giving advice concerning how to do so. That is seen in his continued words of the verse, beginning with, “these things I write to you.”

This is referring to everything he has written so far, but it then includes everything from this point on. He has given words concerning Christ, and he has spoken of sin. Now he will combine the two thoughts in this one verse and then continue to expand on what he says. He writes, “so that you may not sin.”

He has already shown that we have sin, and that we have sinned. Sin is the problem; Christ is the cure. The goal of the Christian is to not sin. However, his next words imply that the goal is not fully attainable. That begins to be revealed with, “And if anyone sins.”

It is a general thought which could apply to any person who has come to Christ. There is no distinction such as age, years in Christ, job title, or any other such thing. John simply leaves the possibility open that it could be anyone. But he then includes himself and the other apostles in the equation by saying, “we have an Advocate.”

John has gone from an indefinite pronoun, “anyone,” to the first-person plural, “we.” The “anyone” of the previous words has become personal – “you, me... anyone.” In essence, “Whoever sins, even if it is one of us, there is an Advocate there for us.” The word “Advocate,” is *paraklétos*. It is used only five times. The other four uses are in John 14, 15, and 16. Each of those four uses is referring to the Holy Spirit, but here it is referring to Jesus. Depending on the translation, He is called the Comforter, Helper, etc.

At the time of John writing this epistle, it was used to define someone who would give evidence which could stand up in court. The person providing it would be a legal advocate who would present this evidence because he was close enough to the matter to know the situation. John says that this Advocate is “with the Father.”

Jesus isn’t just an Advocate who represents man and stands with him, but He is intimately associated with the Father. There is a union between the two which allows Him complete access to the very presence of God. He can provide His evidence for us directly to God.

A fuller scope of what this means will come in the next verse, but for now it is to be understood that the closeness of Christ to us, and the closeness of Christ to the Father, reveals that there is a union between the three. As John says, this Advocate is “Jesus Christ the righteous.”

In the Greek, there is no article before “righteous.” Therefore, it would be clearer to say, “Jesus Christ *the* Righteous One.” Righteousness defines who He is. It is an assertion that in His humanity He alone is righteous before God. However, in His humanity, He is willing to stand with us before His Father.

Life application: In the first chapter, John was stating hypothetical cases which involved non-believers, but also which pointed to the life of believers. Here at the beginning of the second chapter, he switches to the term “My little children.” There is no doubt that he is addressing saved believers in his coming thoughts. He uses the term to show affection to those who are growing in the family of God.

The statement “so that you may not sin” is given in anticipation of keeping his readers from sin, but fully expecting that they will sin... “and if anyone sins...” This isn’t a contradiction in thought, but rather an understanding of our fallen nature.

This is no different than going to a sound biblical sermon today. The pastor who properly handles God’s word will give instruction in right living, proper behavior, and God’s expectations. However, he will also empathize with the struggles of the congregation and explain the importance of confession. If he is truly honest, he will even include his own regular failings and how he handles them.

The very fact that John brings in Jesus’ role as our “Advocate” proves that he knows sin will come. No one needs an advocate when they haven’t been charged with an offense.

In the book of 1 Timothy, Paul calls Jesus our “Mediator.” Here John calls Jesus our “Advocate.” Although similar, it would be good to define both roles –

Mediator – a person who intervenes to bring about an agreement.

Advocate – a person who pleads for or in behalf of another: an intercessor or a lawyer.

As you can see, a mediator brings about an agreement between two parties, but an advocate pleads in defense of his accused. When we sin, we stand accused of violating one of God’s precepts. But Jesus, who has already taken our punishment, stands in defense of our failing – His scars are proof that the punishment has been meted out. When we are in Christ, the sins we have committed are covered by His righteousness.

Thank You, O God, for Jesus who stands as our Advocate when we fail to meet Your infinitely perfect standards. Forgive us of our transgressions, not because we deserve it, but because of what Jesus did for us on the cross when He satisfied Your righteous demands for us. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. 1 John 2:2

John now explains the words of the previous verse which say, “and if anyone sins.” When they do, John says that the person has an Advocate with the Father who is “Jesus Christ the righteous.” In explanation of that, he says, “And He Himself is the propitiation.” Here, the words “And He” are in the empathic position – “He Himself.” The same Jesus of verse 1 is now identified as “the propitiation.” Here, John uses a word, *hilasmos*, found only here and in 1 John 4:10.

The word signifies a propitiation. It is an offering intended to appease an angry and offended party. Christ died on the cross, shedding His blood. Through His sacrifice, He provided the necessary propitiation which was only pictured in the Day of Atonement offering found in Leviticus 16 and 23.

Jesus Christ is the actual point of propitiation, but more, it is because of His death that this is so. Another noun, *hilastérion*, which is also found only twice in Scripture explains this. The word means “a sin offering.” It is that by which the wrath of the angry God is appeased.

In type, it was the covering of the ark which was sprinkled with the atoning blood on the Day of Atonement. Its two uses are found in Romans and Hebrews –

“...whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:25, 26

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; ³ and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴ which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵ and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.” Hebrews 9:2-5

These two Greek words, *hilasmós* and *hilastérion*, which equate directly to the Hebrew words *kaphar* and *kapporeth* (covering and mercy seat), speak of Christ Jesus being both that which atones, and He is the place of the atonement “for our sins.” These words then explain the words, “if anyone sins,” of the previous verse. The implication is that without Christ Jesus, there would be no atonement for sin. But in Him, there is full atonement for all sin. That is then seen with the words, “and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

The words, “the whole world,” show the potential scope of the propitiation. Bengel says, “The propitiation is as wide as the sin.” Vincent’s says, “If men do not experience its benefit, the fault is not in its efficacy.” For those who come to God through His offering of Jesus Christ, no sin is too great to be covered. For those who do not come to Him through Christ, even the smallest sin cannot be overlooked or forgiven. Jesus Christ alone is the means of restoration with the Father.

Life application: How often do we hear someone say, “We are all God’s children”? This sounds wonderful and is especially appealing to those who focus entirely on the love of God. A problem rests in this type of thinking though – a problem which is evident from both the Bible and from mere reason.

Biblically, the Bible says that we are “children of wrath” by nature, but even without the Bible, we can reason out that God must be infinitely holy, righteous, just, etc. The

problem arises when we try to grab hold of the love without meeting the other standards – a tension between them exists which cannot be satisfied by anything we do.

For example, we simply cannot fulfill what is necessary to attain His righteousness or meet His just standards. The only option, when left to fend for ourselves, is to receive His wrath. It is, by necessity, the default position.

The word translated as “propitiation” was used in secular Greek writings to note a sacrifice used to appease a wrathful or angry god. This doesn’t merely imply a payment for sin. Instead, it indicates that God is – by nature – truly and justifiably angry at sin. It violates His very nature.

Jesus’ cross – his suffering and death – therefore, provides the propitiation or “appeasement” of this wrath. He is the One who stands between us and the righteous anger that God pours out on our wrongdoing. As a Man, He suffered and died – He was crucified for our sin. As God, He was able to deflect away from us the suffering we deserve and yet prevail over death. Thus, in one amazing action –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

This appeasement is available to all people, meaning the whole world, but is applied only to those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God’s infinite mercy, stemming from His perfect goodness, is expressed to the sons of Adam in a most amazing and wonderful way – the cross of Jesus Christ.

Lord God, what Jesus did is beyond our comprehension. Everything which came about because of His cross is simply beyond imagination. All we can do is look with awe and wonder at what You have done for people like us – lost in sin and in need of a Savior. May we never fail to acknowledge Your greatness, Your splendor, and Your majesty! We shall forever exalt You for what You did in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

1 John 2:3

1 John 2:3 is a boilerplate verse for those who hold to the Hebrew Roots movement to say that Christians are obligated to obey the Law of Moses. This is not only incorrect, but it is a heretical doctrine. To first understand this, the issue of the law being ended must first be addressed. Speaking of the Law of Moses, the author of Hebrews says –

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

“In that He says, ‘A new *covenant*,’ He has made the first obsolete.” Hebrews 8:13

“He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” Hebrews 10:9

Likewise, Paul says of the Law –

“having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Colossians 2:14

These are a mere smattering of the teachings which clearly show that the Law of Moses is done and over. Thus, John cannot be speaking of it in this verse. Further, Paul’s words of 1 Corinthians 7:19 clearly show this –

“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters.*”

Paul says that circumcision is nothing. Rather, he says that believers in Christ are to keep “the commandments of God.” However, circumcision is a commandment of the Law of Moses (see Leviticus 12:3). Therefore, Paul and John cannot be speaking of the Law of Moses. In theology, 1+1 will always equal 2.

Understanding this, John begins this verse with, “Now by this we know that we know Him.” It is an anticipatory statement. John is saying, “We can know that we know God in this way.” The word “Him” is speaking of God (and Jesus is God, so the thought is inclusive of Him), as is evidenced in speaking of the Father in verse 2:2 and then later of “God” in verse 2:5. And the way that we can know we know God is “if we keep His commandments.”

If not the Law of Moses (which is clearly shown to be done away with), then what are the commandments of God? First and foremost, the answer is found in John 6:29 –

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”

Everything involved in the “commandments” of God falls under that overarching statement. Thus, the commandments given to us by Christ Jesus (who is God) are inclusive of everything that is given in this current dispensation to lead us to holiness and righteousness in Christ – faith, love, obedience towards the apostolic writings which reveal God’s intentions for us in Christ, and so forth. Like Paul, John never uses the Law of Moses to convey rules of Christian conduct or obedience.

This is the same thought as is spoken of by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:14 –

“that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing.”

Paul had just told Timothy to flee evil and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Summing that up, he then said for Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith.” This is the commandment of God that was expected of him, and it is the commandment that is expected of us.

Likewise, we read this from John’s gospel, and it was surely on his mind as he penned this epistle –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

Life application: Not only is it taught in Hebrews and in Paul’s writings that the law is over, but the main discussion of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 specifically dealt with Gentiles observing or not observing the Law of Moses – the decision was that they do not have to observe it. And again, the entire book of Galatians deals with this subject.

Of the Ten Commandments, those which we are obligated to observe are those repeated in the apostolic writings. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated, but observing the Sabbath Day isn’t. There is no requirement to observe the Feasts of the Lord, dietary restrictions, or any other tenet in the Law of Moses. The only requirements for believers are those found in the epistles which explain the New Covenant.

If you are confronted by someone who says you are obligated to observe the Law of Moses, tell them, “Hit the highway, heretic.”

Lord, give us wisdom and insight into the treasure of the New Testament which reveals the New Covenant that came at such a high cost. May we never fall from the grace found in Your work by going back to works of the law in an attempt to satisfy You. Rather, may we live in Your rest and trust in Your accomplishments alone for our justification. Amen.

He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4

John just spoke of knowing Christ. We can make this claim if we keep His commandments. Now, he makes an antithetical statement which begins with, “He who says, ‘I know Him.’” Here is a person who says He knows Christ. But if what he just said is true, such a claim would be contingent on this person obeying God’s commandments. However, this person is now said by John to be one who “does not keep his commandments.”

The two thoughts are mutually incompatible. But that brings us back to what “His commandments” means from the previous verse. The main idea of what is contained here is found in the gospel of John. As noted in the previous verse, it is found in John 6:29 –

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”

One must, before all else, believe in Jesus Christ. It is He who was sent by God. Without this work, it is impossible to please God. Only in accepting the gospel can one be put into the right relationship with God which will then allow Him to look with favor on the obeying of any other commandments of God.

One can love, but without being in Christ, the love is not God-centered. One can obey the words of the apostles, but without receiving Christ first, that is a meaningless waste of time. The parameters have been set. Faith in Christ must precede anything else for God to be pleased with obedience to any of His commandments. This thought is similar to what was stated in 1 John 1:6 –

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

After saying this, John noted that by walking in the light, one can have fellowship with other believers, and “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Without that, the sin remains, and only enmity between God and man is found. Therefore, for a person to say that he knows God, but who does not first come to Christ, John says he “is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The Greek is emphatic, “in him the truth is not.” There can be no truth in a person who claims to know God but who does not believe in Jesus Christ. His statement cannot be reconciled with the reality of the matter. He remains in Adam, he belongs to the devil, and he does not know God.

Life application: As stated in the previous verse, John’s words are not speaking of the Law of Moses. They refer to faith in Christ which is then followed through with learning about Christ and what faith in Him expects, and then in applying that knowledge by applying it to one’s life.

It must be understood that one cannot do what God expects as a believer unless that person is instructed in what to do. Thus, salvation through faith in Christ logically precedes obedience to the commandments for a right walk with God in Christ. If a person believes, and is saved and sealed, but then is never given instruction in the word, it is impossible for that person to be fully obedient to the other commandments.

Everything must find its proper place in our walk with God, but the first thing that must occur is belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be sure to speak out that life-saving message as you go forth into the world full of lost souls.

Lord God, please help us to understand Your word and to think its precepts through clearly so that our lives and our doctrine will be sound. May we never fail to obey that which is ordained by You and may our lives as Christians be evident to those around us so that You will be glorified through our actions and their conversion. This we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 1 John 2:5

John made a statement in verse 2:3, the antithesis of which was stated in 2:4, he now returns to the idea of 2:3 and builds upon it. This is the same thing which he had done in 1:8 through 1:10. Laid out, this can be more clearly seen –

2:3. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

2:4. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

2:5. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

As can be seen, John reverses the order of verse 2:3 as well – "we know him/keep His commandments" becomes "keep His word/we know that we are in Him."

The word "But" is given to contrast the previous verse. In this contrast, he says, "But whoever keeps His word." The "word" is given to parallel "commandments," and yet its meaning is fuller. The "word" speaks of the entire body of God's revelation, whereas "commandments" speaks of those things which immediately apply in any given context.

In other words, there are commandments in the Law of Moses which no longer apply. And so, to keep His word is to do so in the way intended for the dispensation in which we currently live – that of the grace of God in Christ. In keeping His word, John says, "truly the love of God is perfected in him."

Notice the difference between 2:4 and 2:5 in these words. In 2:4, it says if someone doesn't keep His commandments, he is a liar. However, here it now says that for the one who keeps His word, the love of God is perfected in Him. In not keeping his commandments, there is a product which rises out of self – "he is a liar." But in keeping His word, there is a product which is derived from God – "the love of God is perfected in Him."

One can see that the evil which springs up in man is of personal origin, but the good which is found in man stems from God. It goes along well with Paul's words of Romans 3, and which is cited from the psalms –

"They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one." Romans 3:12

"They have all turned aside,
They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good,
No, not one." Psalms 14:3

Apart from God, and His word, we cannot rightly seek after God. But with God's intervention, we can seek after God in a right manner, and God can produce in us that which is pleasing to Him. This then forms "the love of God" which is perfected in us.

It is debated what "the love of God" means. Is it God's love towards us, is it our love towards God, or is it the state of love which is found in God and of which we participate in once we are found in Christ? The answer is probably "all of these." We learn to love God rightly when we know Christ and call on Him. God can fully demonstrate His love towards us only in Christ. And the state of love, which God is, is extended to us because we are found in Christ.

Understanding this, John then says, "By this we know that we are in Him." The words "in Him" must be speaking of Christ Jesus. He is the one who allows us to be partakers in the goodness of God, and apart from Him, this is impossible. In keeping the word of God, as revealed through Jesus Christ, God's love is perfected in us, and we can know that we are in Him.

The union of God and Christ Jesus in John's words demonstrates that not only is Jesus God, but without the revelation of this aspect of God – meaning Christ Jesus – that nothing of what John is conveying to us could even be possible. This will continue to be revealed in the next verse.

Life application: This is the first of many times that the word "love" is used in this epistle. John will deal with the subject of love on many levels as he progresses. Here it is tied in with the perfection of God's love in us through keeping His commandments.

As noted above, although the "love of God" may mean from God to us, it is also probably as much indicating the love we show for Him. Our love is imperfect at best, but the Greek word used here for "is perfected" is *teleioó*. This word conveys the meaning of completeness in love rather than absolute perfection.

So, by keeping the word of the Lord – by obeying His commandments as set forth for us – we are demonstrating an action that loves God for who He is and what He expects of us. When we do these things and act in this manner, we know that we are in Him.

If someone calls on Jesus, he becomes a saved believer. However, when he doesn't follow what God has given us as proper direction in life, there is always that nagging sense that maybe he isn't in the Lord – both in his own mind and in the minds of others

as they see his conduct. Such thoughts shouldn't exist, but they do because we are prone to not keeping His commandments.

This is the case with even the strongest Christians with the deepest of faith. How much more so is this the case when people carelessly fail to follow the Bible. The case for "ignorance is bliss" can be made at this point.

If we don't know everything the Lord expects, then we won't feel bad when we transgress His wishes for us. But this approach lacks commitment, fails to regard the Person and work of Jesus, and puts us in the sad position of facing the Lord's judgment seat with nothing to offer Him in exchange for the salvation He has provided us. This will lead to loss. It is a sad exchange for a life led in the bliss of ignorance.

Lord Jesus, forgive us for not pursuing You and the knowledge of Your word more. Give us a strong desire and a great hunger to know You more with each passing day. Grant us the wisdom to set aside time each day to read Your word, study what You desire for us, and then apply those things to our lives. Forgive us for past failings and set us on a new and straight course as we continue our walk in You. Amen.

Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 1 John 2:7

Without understanding what John is getting at in verses 2:7 and 2:8, one might think he is confused. He will speak of writing no new commandment and then of writing a new commandment. There is no confusion though. His words of writing "no new commandment" are a way of referring to a doctrine which has been set since the inception of the New Covenant. The new commandment he will write about will be referring to the fact that this is a part of the New Covenant, which has superseded the Old. With this understanding, He begins with, "Brethren."

There is a variance in manuscripts here. Some say, "Brethren," while others say, "Beloved." "Beloved" would fit better with the previous context concerning "the love of God," but either way, He next says, "I write no new commandment to you."

The word "new" is one which defines freshness, not age. For example, it would speak of the "New Covenant" as opposed to the "Old Covenant." The age of a covenant isn't what matters, but whether it is applicable still or not. John is saying that he is not

writing something new to the ears, but something that has already been established. That is seen in the words, “but an old commandment.”

In this, Vincent’s Word Studies notes that in the New Testament there are four words used to describe “old” or “elder.” He further provides details on each. For brevity, the word used by John here is *palaios*. He defines it as –

“Παλαιός carries the sense of worn out by time, injury, sorrow, or other causes. Thus the old garment (Matthew 9:16) is παλαιόν. So the old wine-skins (Matthew 9:17). The old men of a living generation compared with the young of the same generation are παλαιοί. In παλαιός the simple conception of time dominates. In ἀρχαῖος there is often a suggestion of a character answering to the remote age. The commandment is here called old because it belonged to the first stage of the Christian church. Believers had had it from the beginning of their Christian faith.”

This is what John was referring to in the verse 2:5, where he said, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.” This is the same thing that they had always heard and been instructed in. It is, therefore, certainly pointing to the commandment of love. That was given by Christ in John 13 –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

By the time of John’s writing, this commandment was certainly known to all. Thus, John now calls it an “old commandment.” This is the same thought that Paul speaks of in several ways, including in Ephesians 5:1, 2 –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

It is this commandment that John now says, “which you have had from the beginning.” From the beginning of the New Covenant, Christ had set forth this commandment, and it then extended forth to all who heard the word. John is repeating that word to ensure it continued to be remembered by those who do believe, and to be passed on to those who will believe. As John notes, “The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.”

The repetition of the thought in these final words is a way of emphasizing what has been conveyed. In essence, “Everything that I am relaying to you is something which has already been put forth. You have heard it from the beginning, and nothing has changed since you heard it.”

Life application: John is saying that he is adding nothing to what was handed down to him from the Lord. Thus, he was not adding in some arbitrary standards of his own.

Jesus told his disciples that the mark of a Christian, and the way which they will be known as true disciples, is by their genuine love for one another. This is a commandment, and it signifies a love which is demonstrable and visible. Whether we like the fellow Christian we are dealing with or not, we are to love him in a way which identifies him as brother in the Lord.

John could pen these words with conviction as he was present with the Lord when he heard Him speak this new commandment. It was his duty as an apostle to pass these words on to his hearers and it is our continued duty – even to this day – to receive them and apply them to our own lives, lest we be found false disciples.

Lord Jesus, you have commanded us to have love for our fellow believers. But you know that can be very hard. They are so... they do such... they act like... But maybe we are that way to them! And so, Lord, change us if needed. Mold us into the loving vessels You have commanded us to be. Change us as individuals so that we will be pleasing disciples in Your eyes. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 1 John 2:8

John just wrote about “an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.” In those words, he was referring to the commandment of love which had been given by Christ at the introduction of the New Covenant. Now he says, “Again, a new commandment I write to you.”

His words are still speaking of the same command to love. However, he now terms it “new” to show that it is something which specifically applies to the New Covenant. As Jesus said –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

Jesus called it “new,” and thus, it is new in the sense that it specifically belongs to the New Covenant. If someone has a ten-year-old car that needs repair on its motor, he may take it to the mechanic who might say, “No problem, this is an old fix.” He has been working on cars like this for almost ten years now. At the same time, he may say, “This is a new technology,” because the type of motor was just introduced when that car came out. Thus, the fix is “old” because it has been since the beginning, and yet it is “new” because it belongs to the newest line of motors.

Of this, “new commandment,” John then says, “which thing is true in Him.” This refers to Christ Jesus. Jesus demonstrated the very love He commanded to his disciples. He was making a connection between the life He revealed, which reflects the very nature of God, and how Christians should also conduct their lives, thus being imitators of God as well. That is reflected in John’s next words, “and in you.”

The connection between Christ and His disciples is exhibited in the love between His followers. To lack such an exhibition of love is to fail to meet the very standard which Jesus lived out and which He then commanded. That will be addressed in the next verse. But to set up that thought, John next says, “because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.”

This ties in with what was said in Chapter 1 –

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:5-7

The darkness is that which is contrary to God and His nature. The “true light” is that which is revealed through Christ, and in His gospel. That true light is then conveyed through, and in harmony with, the love of God. The gospel – which reveals the light of God in Christ – is causing the darkness to pass away as this is light shines in those who receive this message of reconciliation.

Someday, only that which is light will remain. The darkness of false religion, of hate, and of the works of the devil will be ended, and only those who have come to God through Christ will be left. The true light, which is already shining, will be evidenced everywhere and forever.

Life application: Jesus spoke His command to love before the crucifixion, when darkness still covered the world. But just as a sailboat disappears over the horizon, fading into the sea, the spiritual darkness would fade away as the Light of what Jesus did rose to an anxious world. The love He directs us to – the gospel message – was already beginning to shine, but His victory over death brought it to its full splendor when He rose from the grave.

The darkness is simply dissipating from its own inability to overcome the Light; the Light dispels the darkness. And so, the “new commandment” is that we emulate the fullness of the love received in the Person of Jesus. We now have not only the command, but we also have the ability to love our fellow Christians. This “new commandment” is given from the mouth of Jesus before His death and is repeated by His apostles after His resurrection. Truly, what Jesus says in Revelation is true –

“Behold I make all things new.” Revelation 21:5

Marvelous and wise God! Thank You for the New Commandment – that we love our fellow believers even as You have loved us. Give us the desire and the wisdom to be loving and gracious friends to those who belong to You. May we not withhold our love from the fellowship just as You didn’t withhold Yours when You gave us Jesus – the greatest demonstration of love ever. Amen.

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

1 John 2:9

Again, as he has done elsewhere, John now pens a thought antithetical to the previous thought. In the previous verse, there is a positive statement first which says, “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.” In this verse, there is a negative which says, “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.”

The light of Christ is shining, and someone may say, “I am in the light,” claiming that he is a true follower of the Lord. However, John shows the illogical nature of such a statement if he also “hates his brother.” Here, a “brother” is certainly speaking of a

saved believer in Christ. It can, at times, extend to all people. In this case, the true believer is in the light. Light and light complement one another, but light and darkness do not.

John equates darkness with hate. But if God is light, and the gospel is the means of transmitting His light to the world, then there can be no darkness in it. So, how can someone who hates one who is in the light be in the light? John is asking his reader to think this through logically, and to understand that in hating a brother, one is hating what is good. As that which is good is light, then such a person who hates one in the light “is in darkness until now.”

In the heart, there is only room for one or the other. We cannot love as instructed (see 1 Corinthians 13) and also have hate at the same time. But this is the contradictory thinking of humans. We do not think critically, and thus our minds are obscured with darkness.

John will take this thought and expand on it, and he will further clarify it in the next two verses.

Life application: We simply cannot hate our fellow Christians and claim we are walking in the light of God’s love. The two are incompatible and John is immensely blunt in what he writes.

We need to be careful though and not take this to an unintended extreme. If a brother has bad doctrine, if a pastor teaches what is inappropriate, if a preacher fails to preach the truth, we aren’t asked to simply roll over and cover their waywardness with a blanket of gushy love. Rather, such teachings need to be addressed, rebuked, and even excommunicated from the fellowship lest they poison the minds of those who are seeking out the truth.

Balance is needed in the Christian walk – love for the brotherhood while maintaining doctrinal purity. To have love without proper doctrine is a demonstration of untrue love; to have doctrine without love leads to only coldness and condemnation. When the two are properly balanced, Christ is in His rightful spot as the Giver of truth and the Sustainer of the fellowship. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and we will be well rounded in our walk, which is in His light.

Jesus, may we never forsake love when speaking Your word to others. But surely may we also keep from compromising Your truth for the sake of false love and tolerance of what

is not right. Give us the proper balance when discussing Your word. May we properly and faithfully fellowship with our brothers in Christ, loving them as is proper and fitting. Amen.

He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 1 John 2:10

In an initial read of this sentence, one may immediately say, “I understand. John’s words are clear.” But through a quick evaluation of possibilities of what it could mean, the waters may easily get muddled. Cambridge provides four possibilities to what John means –

“There are several ways of taking this.

1. He has *in him* nothing likely to ensnare *him* or cause *him* to stumble.
2. He has *in him* nothing likely to cause *others* to stumble.
3. There is *in his case* nothing likely to cause stumbling.
4. *In the light* there is nothing likely to cause stumbling;—the Greek for ‘in him’ being either masculine or neuter, and therefore capable of meaning ‘in it’. All make good sense, and the last makes a good antithesis to ‘knoweth not whither he goeth’ in 1 John 2:11 : but the first is to be preferred on account of 1 John 2:11. Yet in favour of the second it is worth noting that **σκάνδαλον** is commonly, if not always, used of offence caused to *others*.”

What may be on John’s mind as he wrote these words was what Jesus said in John 11 –

“Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.’” John 11:9, 10

If this is so, then Cambridge’s Option 4 is what is being referred to. However, the word used in John 11 is not the same as that being used here. Despite this, the thought is rather similar. Verses 9-11 show a progression of thought –

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.
He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

It is the light and the darkness which are the main subjects of each verse. They are given to contrast one another, just as Jesus spoke in John 11. Those states are brought about by either love or hate. When one hates, he is in darkness. When one loves, he abides in light. In hating, one has his eyes blinded. In a state of blindness, the person stumbles.

Therefore, John's words show a uniting of the act of love of a brother and the state of abiding in the light. In such a state, there is no reason why he should stumble. In this, he is safe in his walk and can feel secure in his salvation. In verse 15 (and after), John will show that it is not love itself that makes one secure. There, he will speak of the love of the world – something contrary to “the love of the Father.” Therefore, the love of the brother (a love which is properly directed) is a sign of abiding in the light.

Life application: Notice that this verse says, “He who loves” rather than “He who says he loves.” John is making sure that this is a true heartfelt condition in the believer and not just a casual acknowledgment of an expected condition – “Yeah, I love Brother John, but....” There is no “but” and no other conditional argument to be posited here. In other words, we need to actively pursue the love we may not really be feeling until we come to the point that we really feel it.

It is far too easy to pay lip service to this concept and deprive ourselves of the true joy of brotherly love. And not only do we deprive ourselves of this joy, but we also keep a rift between us and the Lord. Darkness surrounds at least a part of what should be intimate fellowship with Him.

John says that such a person who truly loves his brother “abides” in the light. Rather than being a temporary pilgrim who steps in and out of the light, this person lives as a permanent resident in God's presence which is absolute light; in Him there is no darkness at all.

There is also “no cause for stumbling” in a person who lives in constant love of his brothers. John Wesley says, “He that hates his brother is an occasion of stumbling to himself. He stumbles against himself, and against all things within and without; while he that loves his brother has a free disencumbered journey.”

Don't feel bad if you know in your heart that you haven't measured up to the command here. All Christians struggle with the challenge of loving an annoying brother, all struggle with the challenge of loving a bitter brother, and all struggle with the challenge of loving an antagonistic brother. The path of least resistance is to remove oneself from his

presence, but the condition which brings about a real walk in the light of God's garden is to demonstrate that high and noble love even to the one who is otherwise unlovable.

Heavenly Father, You have asked us to love those who are our brothers in Christ. But that seems like a giant hurdle at times. Help us to consider that Christ also died for them, they received that payment, and they are adopted as sons through faith. If You have accepted them, then how can we hate them? Give us the ability to do what often seems contrary to our will. Help us to love those who otherwise seem unlovable to us so that we will reflect the love You have already shown. Amen.

But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.¹ John 2:11

John now builds upon his thought from verse 9. He said there that if one says he is in the light and yet "hates his brother," he remains in darkness. Now he says, "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness." The verb is present, indicative, active – he is currently walking in the darkness, it is a certainty that this is so, and his walk is ongoing.

In the previous verse, John had said, "He who loves his brother abides in the light." In this verse, he states the opposite, but it is an all-inclusive thought. To love is a volitional act. However, to hate involves both active hating as well as simply not loving. To not love is to hate. For a person who is in such a condition, he says that he "does not know where he is going."

A person who walks in the dark cannot sense which direction is right, if there is an open well in front of him, or if a tiger is ready to spring on him. He simply ambles about groping, but unable to find his way. This is a person who is unloving to his brother. And the reason is that "the darkness has blinded his eyes."

The verb here is in the aorist tense. In hating, blindness occurs. It is a set thing which then continues on from that point. To hate those in the brotherhood is to demonstrate a state of blindness which encompasses the entire state of the individual. Christ is the light of men, and to hate those who are of Christ is to then hate the light of Christ in them. There must, therefore, be an active loving of believers to avoid such a catastrophic state in a person.

Life application: In these verses, the contrast is made to show the complete illumination of the light in the believer's life and the absolute darkness of the person deceived

through hate. Notice that the previous three verses are almost like a light switch for us to use as a demonstration –

- 1) The brother who hates is in the darkness (regardless of what he claims, the switch is “off”);
- 2) (Switch on the light and see the contrast...) The brother who loves abides in the light and has no occasion to stumble.
- 3) (Turn the light back off and see the result – “See, the difference!”) This brother is in darkness, his walk (meaning the direction he is heading) is in darkness and hence he is completely lost. The darkness has robbed him of any light at all. He is overshadowed and overcome by darkness.

Such is the tremendous power of hate. It not only robs us of light, but it robs us of any sense of proper direction, and it also robs us of any possibility of spiritual discernment (thus the “blinded eye” metaphor). The lesson being imparted is obvious – if you are consumed by hate, you have completely departed from spiritual light, regardless of what you claim; you are self-deceived. Hate is powerful and blinding, so be on guard against it.

O God – You who dwell in light, keep us from hating our brothers and thus blinding ourselves to the light of Your word. Take away any bitterness that resides in us and give us the power to hand our grief, frustration, and bitterness over to You. Fill us with love for those brothers who have been our enemies so that we may again walk in Your light, without fear of stumbling. Amen.

I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.

1 John 2:12

This verse starts an entirely new section of the letter; one which is ordered by repetition, and one which has a decided symmetry. Modern translations tend to offset it in a manner one would recognize as poetic. It is formed as a pair of “triplets” and in the original Greek, the tense switches in the middle of the section, but without any indication as to why this occurs.

There is an enormous amount of commentary concerning 1 John 2:12-14, and it is quite often compiled into a single commentary rather than three individual commentaries. This is because of the unusual addressees (little children, young men, and fathers), and because of the change from “I write” of the first two verses to “I have written” of the last verse.

Because of the repetition of the addressees, and the unusual formatting of the words, it is hard to analyze each verse individually without missing the overall structure of this wonderful poetic offset.

As a simple breakdown of the three together, Charles Ellicott reveals the following

1.All readers.

1.Children in age. [Suggested, according to the perfect simplicity of St. John's style, by the term used in the first set for his readers generally.]

2.Fathers.

2.Fathers.

3.Youths.

3.Youths.

Reasons.

1.Forgiveness.

1.Knowledge of the Father.

2.Knowledge of Christ.

2.Knowledge of Christ.

3.Victory.

3.Strength, perseverance, victory.

With this general structure in mind, John begins this offset with the words, "I write to you, little children." The verb is present tense, and should say, "I am writing." The word for "little children" is *teknion*. It signifies a little child. It is only used by John, eight times, in this epistle.

Some scholars say it should be taken as a literal address to little children. Others say that John is speaking figuratively of Christians in general, or of immature Christians. Referring to the other uses of the word in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, it is evident that John is using it as a term of endearment, not as an address to literal infants.

The word for "little children" here is different than the word used for "little children" of the next verse. Thus, the "little children" of this verse is speaking in a general sense to all three of the categories in verses 2:13 and 2:14. That is consistent with his use of this term throughout the epistle. In other words, the same people he calls "little children" in this verse will be defined by their maturity in Christ in the next two verses as "fathers," "young men," and "little children" (using a different word).

The variation in terms from little children, to young men, to fathers is then a literary technique intended to highlight his words and show an advancement in thought. With this in mind, John next says, “Because your sins are forgiven you.” Here, the verb is in the perfect tense. It more accurately reads “have been forgiven.” The act is done, once and forever.

The reason for calling his audience “little children” becomes obvious here. John is speaking of and to all people. As all people are born in Adam, all people – including little children – have inherited sin. From the moment of conception, through the gestation period, at the time of birth, and as a child grows to the age of weaning, all people bear the stain of Adam’s sin.

Because of this, there is a disconnect between God and man. It is one which extends to all. However, in Christ there is forgiveness. The one who comes to Christ in faith, as a little child, is granted forgiveness of sins “for His name’s sake.” God was pleased to forgive the erring child of his sins because of that simple act of faith in what He accomplished through the giving of His own Son.

Therefore, John tenderly notes the love of God in Christ for the sons of Adam who are willing to come to Him through Jesus and become adopted sons of God. They become His “little children,” and John addresses them as such, calling them his own “little children” who are now in the faith and under his care as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Life application: As the words “your sins are forgiven” are in the perfect tense, meaning the forgiveness has already been accomplished and is complete, we have, again and for the ten jillionth time in the New Testament, the absolute assurance of eternal salvation. That which has been forgiven is finished, complete, and perfect. Future transgressions are already under the blood and forgiven even though we haven’t yet committed them.

Let us endeavor to not commit them though, but to live for our Heavenly Father through the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus and for His name’s sake. Should we falter in our attempts, let us recognize our failure and press on in His great and eternal assurance. No greater gift has ever been given, so let us remember it in both our failings and in our determined effort to move forward. Let us put the past behind.

O Heavenly Father! As your little children, we thank You for the tender words of forgiveness You provide us in Your word. Thank You for being the gracious and loving Creator who cares enough, even about us, to send Your Son as an offering of peace and

reconciliation. Give us the determined effort to live for You, through His name, all the days of our lives. Amen.

**I write to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
Because you have overcome the wicked one.
I write to you, little children,
Because you have known the Father. 1 John 2:13**

John's poetic offset which began in verse 2:12 now continues with the first of two triplets. He first wrote to the "little children," concerning their sins having been forgiven "for His name's sake." That was a general address to all of the categories he will now define by their maturity in Christ.

Beginning the triplet, he now next says, "I write to you, fathers." The verb is present tense. It should read, "I am writing to you." This is the case with all three instances in this verse.

The addressees being "fathers" indicates maturity and/or authority. Thus, his words next say, "Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning." The very statement indicates maturity. It speaks of a developed theology concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. As John said in His gospel –

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." John 1:1-4

That depth of knowledge is what John then expanded on as he introduced this epistle with the words, "That which was from the beginning." The addressees as "fathers" speaks of such mature knowledge which can then be passed on to those believers who were but "little children" in the faith. For example, the fathers understand that Jesus is the eternally existent Creator – fully God and yet fully man because of the incarnation.

John then says, "I write to you young men." The Greek word here speaks of a young man or a youth. James Strong defines him as someone who is under forty. John says he is writing to them because they "have overcome the wicked one." At such an age, these

addressees are in the process of formulating their Christian character and in rightly understanding the doctrines which are presented through the word and by the apostles.

They not only have an understanding of the forgiveness of sin through Christ, but they can apply that understanding in how that brings them to victory in Christ. To overcome is to have faith in Christ's work, but just because a child (the previous verse) understands his sins are forgiven, he may not understand the doctrine of eternal salvation. In other words, one can be an overcomer without realizing it. The young men are established enough to understand this fact.

It is "the wicked one" they have overcome through the blood of Christ. There is the understanding that in Jesus, there is complete victory and total assurance of salvation. John will speak of the wicked one throughout this epistle, directly using the term, or by referring to him in other ways. In Chapter 3, he will return to the "little children," to help them clarify their thinking about this entity –

"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." 1 John 3:7-9

The "young men" possess enough understanding of the work of Christ to have the surety and maturity that the "little children" still lack.

John next says, "I write to you, little children." Here, a different word is used than in verse 2:12. There, it was *teknia*. Here it is *paidion*. This speaks of a little child under training, maybe seven or younger. Some scholars apply it to one who is even up to twenty. Regardless of age, it speaks of a still immature believer. He is still referring to believers, but his words speak of real immaturity in Christ and a great need for doctrinal improvement. They know the Father because of the Son, but they are completely confused in their theology about the Son.

To them, John says, "Because you have known the Father." The verb translated as "have known" is perfect tense. It thus gives the sense of "you do know, and you continue to know." Simply stated, "you know."

In such a person, he has the knowledge of forgiveness of sin. Through that knowledge, he has come to understand the very heart of the Father. Probably no better thought of the state of this addressee can be found than the opening words of the next chapter –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1 John 3:1-3

In coming to Christ, even the youngest and most immature believers can understand the love of the Father for his children. Thus, John addresses them in this manner.

Life application: As you can see, John is writing to the body of believers, but he is making real distinctions in their doctrinal maturity without questioning their salvation. May we act in a like manner towards those of less understanding and maturity in Christ.

Lord Jesus, help us to understand that just because someone is less informed about the mystery of Jesus’ work and the significance of what He has done, that person is no less saved than others are. May we never arrogantly point our fingers at another blood-bought believer in Christ and tear them apart just because we have a deeper knowledge of who He is and what He did than they do. Instead, help us be instruments of correction and sound doctrine for them. Amen.

**I have written to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.
I have written to you, young men,
Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked one. 1 John 2:14**

John completes his poetic offset with this verse. It is the second triplet, and in it he changes the verb “I write,” which was present tense to aorist, “I have written.” Note: In the previous verse, some texts change the tense from “I write” to “I have written” which is written to the “little children,” as well.

Several suggestions have been given for this change, but what seems the most likely is that the change is based on the document being spoken of. The present tense speaks of the epistle that he is currently writing. However, he uses the aorist tense to refer to the

gospel which is written. If this is so, then the supposition that the epistle was to accompany the gospel makes much sense.

If so, and therefore, the Gospel of John is his writing concerning the actual life and events of Jesus and is not mixed with anything that would convolute that narrative. The epistle of 1 John is then an accompanying explanation of doctrinal points to assist the reader of the gospel in understanding how to apply the truths contained within the gospel to the reader's walk.

Whether this is correct or not, John's change to the aorist tense begins with, "I have written to you fathers." It is the same thought as that which began verse 13, only changing the tense of the verb. He then continues with, "Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning." It is the exact same thing he said to the fathers in the previous verse.

He then continues with, "I have written to you, young men." Again, it is exactly how he addressed the young men of the previous verse with the exception of a change in the tense of the verb. From there, he changes what he says to the young men with, "Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you." The word "strong" is the Greek word *ischuros* and is normally associated with physical strength and the abilities associated with that condition. The fact that he adds in "the word of God abides in you" is clearly tied into the reason that they have (as he next says, repeating the thought from the previous verse) "overcome the wicked one."

Overcoming refers to those who not only understand their sins are forgiven (the "little children" of verse 2:12), but those who understand that this forgiveness means they have assurance of salvation. Where does this understanding come from? This knowledge of the doctrine of eternal salvation is tied into a greater understanding of the Person and work of Jesus Christ and being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Such knowledge comes from "the word of God" being heard, remembered, and reflected upon.

Two people may hear the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, but only one may understand the full implication of this because he accurately processes what has been relayed to him. This person has the word of God abiding in him, not just a casual understanding that Jesus died to forgive him of his sins. He understands that Satan is defeated and can never again take hold of him or his soul. Such a person has not only overcome the world through the blood of Christ, but he has also overcome the wiles of the devil in this life. He is not only safe in his salvation, but he is confident in it as well.

Life application: The person who comes to Christ in faith is saved and sealed for the day of redemption. But that person may not understand this. His walk is one of constant fear, trepidation, and uncertainty. He is tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that comes his way, and the devil has a field day as he tears the poor soul apart.

However, a person who matures in his faith, and who properly understands the doctrines of the Bible – which include eternal salvation – has a sure and steady foot on the path of this life. The devil has no ability to continue tearing him apart.

Let us be mature in our doctrine and let us keep away from those who teach that salvation can be lost, as if the sufficiency of Christ is no sufficiency at all. Such teachers trust in self to complete the task. Self is a poor spot to place one's trust. Have faith in Christ, and be sure of your salvation. Christ has done it all. Rest in that!

Thank You Lord for lessons taught in Scripture which are so clear concerning the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins and of eternal salvation. Thank You for the great depths of the riches of wisdom and knowledge which are revealed in Your word. Help our doctrine to be pure, and may the word of God abide in us richly all the days of our lives. Amen.

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. 1 John 2:15

John now jumps directly from the poetic thoughts of the previous three verses which described overcoming through Christ and headlong into a fixed and firm statement about not loving the things of the world. It appears that it is a new thought which is disconnected from what he has just said, but this is not the case. In the previous verses, he spoke of overcoming the wicked one, meaning the devil.

Understanding this, the next verses will show quite clearly that the things of the world are a part of what the devil entices man with. Therefore, as believers have “overcome the wicked one,” it would be contrary to love the things which the wicked one tempts man with. Understanding this, John begins the verse with, “Do not love the world or the things in the world.”

This is not contradictory to John 3:16, which says, “For God so loved the world...” The word *kosmos*, or “world,” has various meanings which must be taken in context. The word speaks of an ordered system. This can be the physical world which involves everything concerning its operational order. It can extend to the entire creation which goes beyond the world itself. It can speak of the people of the world, as the ensemble of

humanity. It can also speak of the sphere of life in which humans exist – people working for success, wealth, fulfilling lusts, and etc.

It is the last use, which is referred to here, as will be seen in the coming verses. We are not to love what fallen humanity loves. We are not to pursue the things which the normal order of human existence finds worthy of adoration or even worship. Jesus said, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

Those to whom Jesus was speaking had put the system of the world before God. They pursued wealth, power, notoriety, or whatever other thing would satisfy their earthly desires instead of pursuing God. In this, they showed where their hearts were directed, and where their priorities really were. John says of this attitude, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

The meaning “the love of the Father,” is speaking of “love for the Father.” This goes back to what John said earlier about light and darkness. Though at that time he was speaking of loving or hating a brother, the idea is the same. Light and darkness cannot exist at the same time. Likewise, loving the world excludes love for the Father. Jesus succinctly stated the concept when He said, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

Our honoring of the Father comes through our honoring of the Son. But we cannot honor the Son while we are actively loving and pursuing the things of the world. John will continue to explain this in the coming verses.

Life application: John’s words may be a rebuke to some extent, because the command “do not love” is in the present tense and an active voice. This indicates that at least some of the addresses may have been following the way of the world. As it is likely that the “little children” addressed in the previous verses were immature believers, it could be that he is addressing them specifically.

This is more than probable when we see that it is they to whom he said, “you have known the Father.” This then may be a sudden and stern warning that they need to grow up and become more doctrinally sound. John’s words are certainly still pertinent to believers today. As this letter has become a part of Scripture, we know that it certainly applies to our lives as well.

The church is no less filled with immature believers now than then – and it is probably more so. Such people have one foot in the church, and the other is stuck in the mud of the world – meaning its systems and enticements. This world system that has been arranged by Satan is at enmity with God. There is no middle ground in the battle which is occurring in the spiritual conflict between the Light and the darkness that John previously mentioned.

God is due our highest devotion, our greatest adoration, our fixed attention, and our loudest praise. This should be such that there isn't room for anything else in our lives but Him. Have you yet arrived at that place? If not, press on in His grace – using the world in which we live, but not loving it or clinging to it. Fix your eyes on Jesus and your heart on the Everlasting God.

Lord, it is a high and hard goal to completely let go of the world, but this is what we should desire. Keep us from loving it and all it contains. Despite the things which are ever-so tempting, we know that we need to put them behind us and focus solely on You and the glories which are ahead. Until then, remind us again and again that it is Jesus where our eyes should rest. Amen.

For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 1 John 2:16

As noted in the previous verse, there are several thoughts that can speak of “the world” when the Greek word *kosmos* is used. It speaks of an ordered system, but it can mean various things, including the physical world which involves everything in its operational order. That can even extend to the entire creation which goes beyond the world itself. Or, it can speak of the people of the world, as the ensemble of humanity. Further, it can also speak of the sphere of life in which humans exist – people working for success, wealth, fulfilling lusts, and etc.

It was stated in the previous commentary that the last of these three is what John is referring to here. That will be confirmed by his words now. He begins with, “For all that *is* in the world.” What he will next refer to is, therefore, an all-inclusive thing. The ordered system which impels the sphere of life, in which humanity operates, is at enmity with the Father.

It is obvious that this is not the case with the physical world. God created the heavens and the earth, and He called them good. This has not changed in the ultimate sense as is

testified to by Scripture, and as is evidenced in the coming of Christ. For the Lord to unite with humanity demonstrates that the Father found it acceptable for Him to do so.

It is obviously not the people of the world, in and of themselves. This is testified to in John 3:16, where the word *kosmos*, or “world,” speaks of the people of the world. God was willing to send Christ to redeem fallen man. Thus, the love of the Father is for this part of His creation, even if there is a moral disconnect which currently separates the two.

That moral defect, however, is driven by the third meaning of *kosmos* – that which forms the sphere of life in which man exists. John next describes that thing which continuously impels man forward within this system, calling it “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

What is seen here hearkens all the way back to Genesis chapter 3 –

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. Genesis 3:2-6

As you can see, Eve was tempted with, and fell for...

- 1) the lust of the flesh – the “tree was good for food;”
- 2) the lust of the eyes – “it was pleasant to the eyes;” and
- 3) the pride of life – “in the day you eat of it...you will be like God.”

This then is the part of what God created which is now opposed to Him. The first two – desires of the flesh and of the eyes – may have defects because of this, but they can be and will be corrected as is promised elsewhere in Scripture. However, this part of the system – the pride of life – is opposed to God because it puts the things of creation, and the will of man, ahead of God and of His perfect will for man. It is contrary to what is morally right, and it must be eliminated for man to again have restored fellowship with God.

If you follow the account of Jesus' three temptations by Satan, he offered Jesus the same three enticements –

- 1) the lust of the flesh – When Jesus was hungry, Satan said, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”
- 2) the lust of the eyes – After showing him all the kingdoms of the world, Satan proclaimed “...if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”
- 3) the pride of life – After asking, “If you are the Son of God,” Satan challenged “throw Yourself down from here.”

But where Adam failed, Jesus prevailed. He stood firm against the devil's enticements, and He continued to love the Father more than the temptations of the world. But this is what the devil offers, something to replace God in our worldly ordered system. As John says of this, it “is not of the Father but is of the world.”

Jesus was directed to the things of the Father, and He prevailed. But when we pursue the things of the world, we pursue that which is not of the Father. This is the point John is making, and it is a point revealed throughout Scripture. An interesting parallel of this is even found in the Levitical system of cleanliness. In Leviticus 13:2, it says – “When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body *like* a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.”

What does that verse in Leviticus have to do with the subject John is speaking of? Watch the sermon, “The Law of Leprosy, Part 1” and find out- (Links: [YouTube](#) / [Sermon Audio](#))

Life application: Today, Satan challenges us in exactly the same way he always has. To succumb to these temptations is to succumb to the love of the world – Satan's domain. This is the proper interpretation of “the world” in these verses, and it is meant to remind us that we simply cannot live for God without relying completely on –

- 1) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,
- 2) our knowledge of the Bible, and
- 3) complete faith in, and reliance on, the Person and promises of Jesus Christ.

If we don't hold fast to these, we are opening ourselves up to complete disaster in every aspect of our lives. Let us hold fast to the truth God has given us in these three avenues of keeping ourselves from Satan's enticements.

Heavenly Father, the devil is there tempting us every step of the way – luring us to fall back into the life of sin Jesus saved us from. Please, we ask of You, keep us from his temptations and give us the will and the power to hold fast to our commitment to You. We know we are powerless without You, so be with us every moment and in every step. Amen.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:17

John spoke of the things of the world in the previous verse, meaning the ordered system of the world. He now says, And the world is passing away. The Greek is a present verb, passive. This means that it is ongoing, and it is simply happening through the natural course of time.

There is nothing permanent in this passing system and, therefore, there is nothing that can be relied upon or trusted in. When one trusts in a government, the government is overthrown, goes bankrupt, or etc. When a person feels confident in his strength, he eventually ages and becomes weak, or he has an accident and is paralyzed, etc. The things we trust are temporary and will not last. This includes “the lust of it.”

Man lusts after money and it is lost, stolen, or eaten away in its storage vault. Man lusts after beauty, and the beauty ages and fades away. Man lusts after power, and the position is eliminated, the business goes bankrupt, or the election is lost and the power is gone. Because the world system is temporary, and because lust for the things of the world is directed to that which is temporary, there is nothing that has any true permanency. However, John then contrasts that with, “but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

The Greek reads, “abides to the age.” The person who does the will of God is doing that which is, by its very nature, eternal. As God is the Creator, what He does and who He is stands forever. Therefore, when one does the will of God, what he does is not a part of this age, but of the age to come. This isn’t speaking of the man not dying. Until the Lord comes, all will continue to die. But the things man does while here, and which are directed toward God’s will, are enduring. They belong to the age which is not passing away.

Life application: Because John’s words concerning the passing away of the world are in the present tense, it tells us that “it is already passing away.” The decay has begun, and

the final end of what we now see and live in will continue to ebb until it is completely used up.

Think of what he is saying in comparison to a tank of gas. “The fuel is being used up.” Again, the present tense in our language tells us it is being used and it is diminishing. At some point, the tank will be empty. The verb “is passing away” is *paragó*, and suggests that this is occurring all by itself; it is like a canker on a tree which, in destroying the tree, destroys itself.

John says in the same context, “and the lust of it.” The same thing which is happening to the world system is occurring to the lust of the world. The eyes which lust the temporary are also temporary and will have an end – being used up in futility.

But in contrast to those, the one who does God’s will aligns himself with the eternal, not the temporary. The words “abide” and “forever” both speak of this, and provide the believer with the assurance that the will and promises of God go beyond the current age into the eternal sphere. The Greek word *aion*, or “ages,” assures us of this. This all points back to the one who reflects on God’s word as is noted in the first Psalm –

“He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.” Psalm 1:3

Lord, when the trials and sadness of this life seem too much to bear, or when we look on the wickedness occurring around us, we can return to the beautiful words You have given us in Your word, and we can rejoice in the promises of the age to come, when all this trial and trouble will be no more. May You return soon and set up that eternal system! Amen.

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:18

John has been speaking of the things of the world, a system ruled by the devil. With that in mind, he now enters into a new aspect of this doctrine, beginning with, “Little children.” Here, as in verse 2:13, he uses the word *paidia* for “little children.”

It is not the other word, *teknia*, which he uses as a term of endearment. Thus, this is indicating their immaturity in the doctrine he is going to talk about and explain – that of the antichrist and the last times. He says, “it is the last hour.” It is a term used only here in the New Testament, and it doesn’t contain a definite article in the Greek. Therefore, this may indicate that he didn’t believe Christ’s return would be soon, but it is rather a general statement about the entire church age – something that is of indeterminate length.

This is supported by the statement of Jesus at the ascension when the apostles asked if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time. His answer indicated that they needed to get about the work of the gospel and not worry about what was under the Father’s authority, but it also indicates that his recipients knew the Antichrist was coming. As John says, “and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming.”

This term “anti” can mean someone standing openly against Jesus (the Christ) or someone who is attempting to be a substitute for Him – something more subtle and befitting the pattern of the workings of the devil. The latter is more likely, especially when we see Paul’s description of him in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10 –

“The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Elsewhere, Jesus spoke of false Christs (Greek: *pseudochristos*). Like a false prophet, these are people attempt to fill an office without denying what the office stands for. Thus, a false Christ will attempt to fulfill the qualifications of the Christ. However, such a false prophet understands the meaning of “Messiah” or “Christ.”

On the other hand, an antichrist (or the Antichrist) may be someone who not only claims to be the Christ, and who claims he is the embodiment of Christ – including the office and teachings – but he does so while denying the truth of what the office represents. He stands in complete opposition to it. With this marked distinction made, Vincent’s word studies describes the “last hour” by saying –

“The dominant sense of the expression last days, in the New Testament, is that of a period of suffering and struggle preceding a divine victory. See Acts 2:17; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20. Hence the phrase here does not refer to the end of the world, but to the

period preceding a crisis in the advance of Christ's kingdom, a changeful and troublous period, marked by the appearance of 'many antichrists.'"

The time for the final Antichrist is coming, but John says that the truth is that "even now many antichrists have come." To understand what this means, one must go forward to verse 2:22 where John explicitly states, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."

It is the denial of the relationship between the Father and the Son – meaning that Christ is of God and thus is God – that defines what is antichrist. Even at the time of John, antichrists had arisen. They denied the Father/Son relationship, and thus they stood in opposition to Christ, the only begotten Son of God. As this attitude had already infected the world at John's time, he then explains the significance of that truth by saying, "by which we know that it is the last hour."

The "last hour" of the church is that hour which is marked by this challenge of holding to the truth of who Christ is. As John already acknowledged it as the last hour, the thought of every moment being challenged by this aberrant doctrine is a moment that must be engaged by the church and spoken against. When the church stops challenging the doctrine of the antichrist (through negligence or because of the rapture), the field will be ripe for the final Antichrist to step forward and begin his unholy ministry.

Life application: John takes time to note that the world was already influenced by the power of "many antichrists." These are people who deny the workings of Jesus Christ, God's Messiah, the Son of God. Any tenet which diminishes His work, or His deity, falls under the category of "antichrist." To deny the Son of God wasn't possible until He was manifest in the flesh. Since that time, Satan has come to dismiss the work Christ Jesus wrought on behalf of the world. This will continue to increase until the rapture of the church. At that time, Satan's work will climax in the person of the Antichrist himself.

Heavenly Father, you sent Your Son, our Lord Jesus, to show us the way to You. Keep us from the deceitful lies of Satan, and protect us from the spirit of the Antichrist which is intended to diminish Jesus' work and misdirect our faith in Him. Prompt us to fix our eyes on Jesus, because nothing else will do. Only in Christ Jesus can our souls be satisfied. Amen.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. 1 John 2:19

John just said, “even now many antichrists have come.” Now he says of them, “They went out from us.” The words can be viewed in one of two ways –

- 1) They were removed from us, or
- 2) They had their origin with us. The next clause will show that it is speaking of the latter. These people who came from within the church had failed to accept the truth of Christ.

As noted in the evaluation of the previous verse, an antichrist is someone “who denies that Jesus is the Christ” (as will be seen in verse 2:22). Therefore, they deny the Father/Son relationship. To deny the Son is to deny the Father who sent the Son. These people, who deny this necessary truth, “were not of us.” This shows that the words, “They went out from us,” refer to their origin within the church.

As is seen, just because someone teaches a heresy, it does not mean he is an “antichrist.” As John has defined who an antichrist is, we cannot change the meaning. In other words, the various denominations that once started as sound and proper may now have departed from the truth, but they still accept the deity of Christ and acknowledge the Father/Son relationship. Therefore, they cannot be considered as “antichrist.” They may not be of the church any longer, but their heresy is different than what John is referring to here.

However, a cult like the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons do deny this relationship, and thus they can be considered under the umbrella of “antichrist.” John is dealing with the specific denial of Jesus being the Christ. These cults don’t overtly deny this, and in fact, they claim they believe it, but their definition of who “Jesus” is cannot be reconciled with the truth proclaimed in Scripture. Their “Christ” is a false Christ, their gospel is a false gospel, and their doctrines – which are tantamount to a denial – denial shows that they are antichrist.

John next says, “for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” One can simply insert someone like Joseph Smith of the Mormons (and his subsequent followers) into this. He started in the “church,” following various ideas that grew out of the Christian faith. But he later went out from the church, following his own delusions. John’s words say that if this heretic was truly one of the church, he would have continued with the church – meaning that which is based upon the truth of God in Christ.

John next says, “but *they went out* that they might be made manifest.” This is exactly what the Mormons did, it is what the Jehovah’s Witnesses did, and etc. They not only formed a new denomination, but they did so by cutting themselves off from all other denominations. They did this by proclaiming a “Christ” who is not of the Father, because He is not the begotten Son. In their false belief, they show “that none of them were of us.”

Here, the verb is a present participle. It should read, “that none of them are of us.” These offshoots of the church have openly manifested that they are heretical sects whose teachings cannot be reconciled with the truth of God in Christ. They, and their followers, have nothing to do with the true faith. Unless they turn from their false teachings, they will be condemned with the rest of the world when the world is judged.

These are but two of the numerous groups which deny this fundamental truth, meaning that Jesus is the Christ, and that “Christ” means begotten of the Father – He is fully God and fully Man. To deny this fundamental truth of God in Christ is a sign of antichrist.

Life application: John made a play on words when he wrote this in Greek, that we don’t clearly see in the translation. When he says they went out “from us,” it’s the term *ex hemon*. He again uses *ex hemon* when he said they would have continued “with us.” Then a third time he uses *ex hemon* when he says that none of them were “of us.” He is letting us know that although there are those who are with us physically, it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re of the body of believers spiritually.

John notes that if they were true believers, they would “have continued” in the faithful walk of believers. However, as has happened throughout the ages, some people are simply twisted in their concept of God or are even complete disbelievers in any Creator. They may totally depart from any faith at all and simply lead their lives from a totally human perspective, or they may look around and see the power that spiritual leaders have over others and decide to “invent up” a new religious sect that will bring them the glory that only the Lord is due.

Joseph Smith’s apostasy led to tearing away many souls from sound religious doctrine – a pattern which unfortunately continues today. The list of such antichrists is long and scary because quite often they fuse their false doctrine with smidgens of sound doctrine. But as Paul says in Galatians 5:9, “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

Once heretical doctrine is infused into instruction, it permeates and pollutes the entire doctrine. Be careful to evaluate the church you attend or are considering. What may appear as sound and honoring could very well be reason for dismissal from the presence of Christ. The best advice for us to follow is to never direct our attention to a charismatic leader, but rather “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...” Hebrews 12:2.

Lord Jesus, we pray for those who would consider following the strange and unsound doctrine of false teachers. Give them clarity of thinking that they may reject these heretics. Likewise, keep us secure as well, and let us not be drawn away by strange and unprofitable teachings. Rather, help us to keep our eyes and thoughts on Jesus. Amen.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

1 John 2:20

John has been speaking of “antichrists,” and their departure from the truth because they were not “of us.” He will again refer to them in verse 2:22. Between these verses, he now introduces this thought, saying, “But you have an anointing.” The implication is that those who departed have no such anointing. Their lives, doctrine, and conduct are not in accord with the truth of God in Christ.

The word “anointing” is the Greek word *chrisma*. It signifies the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit which will guide the believer into understanding God’s will. There is an inward conviction and persuasion which will take place when the believer seeks after the truth as presented to him (first by the apostles, and now by the word of God which came through those men of God).

Under the Old Covenant, oil was used to anoint priests, prophets, and kings to symbolize that they were ordained for the task they had been given. This oil is a symbol or picture of the anointing of the Holy Spirit on believers today. As Peter says in his first epistle –

“But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” 1 Peter 2:9

It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit which places us in that position, and which allows us to properly understand His word, and which makes us suitable to perform our tasks in a manner pleasing to God. This is in contrast to those who are antichrists of the previous verses.

John is forming a play on words, contrasting the antichrists *antichristoi* of the previous verses to those who have received the *chrisma* of this verse. The “anointing” that believers have is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – the third member of the Trinity. If someone denies the reality of, or the deity of, the Holy Spirit, he is doing the same thing as denying the deity of Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit of God which illuminates Scripture for the believer. It is He who comforts the believer and reminds him of the salvation he received when he accepted Jesus as Lord, meaning God.

John next says that the anointing is “from the Holy One.” Scholars debate whether this is referring to Christ or to the Holy Spirit. The answer is Christ, the Anointed One (which is what “Christ,” or “Messiah,” signifies). The anointing is the Holy Spirit. This was stated by Jesus in several ways. It is the final promise of Christ before He was taken up –

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit is given to every believer who calls on Jesus through the gospel, as is stated by Paul in Ephesians 1 (and elsewhere) –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

John and Paul are referring to the same thing, the coming of the Holy Spirit into the believer, but they are using different terms to explain different aspects of what occurs. Christ is the Holy One, and the Holy Spirit is the anointing by which we are anointed and sealed. Each member of the Godhead performs His own particular role in the unfolding plan of the redemption of mankind.

Finally, in this anointing, John says, “and you know all things.” Some manuscripts say, “and you know all.” This set of words should not be taken to unhealthy extremes. His words lead directly into the next verse which speaks of knowing the truth. The Holy Spirit is the One who leads us in the proper knowledge about the truth of God – the source of all things. He opens our understanding as we search out God’s truth in the Bible.

The word “know” speaks of discernment and perceiving. What John is saying cannot, obviously, mean that all believers know and have discerned everything about theology. The differences in opinion about one thousand points of doctrine are so varied that there is almost no harmony at all between scholars and denominations. Some people come to Christ and are never schooled in any doctrine at all. Some people inject their own presuppositions directly into the Bible as they read. And so on.

Because of these things, John’s words must be taken in light of Scripture, and that is to be in proper context. Believers have this resource available to them, and through it they “know all” that is necessary to hold fast to the truth of God in Christ. There is no necessary extra revelation provided to believers outside of the Bible. It alone is our source for knowing all that we need to know.

Life application: John’s words of this verse mark a sharp rebuke against false teachers. It is surely and particularly directed at those who believe they have the secret knowledge of God at their disposal, or locked up in their simple and irrational denomination, when in fact they have no true knowledge at all.

Should you find yourself attending a church where they make exclusive claims on the truth and that everyone else is false, you are probably in a place which is the opposite of what is described by John here. Claiming exclusive or secret knowledge is a sure sign that there is a manipulation or rejection of the truth, because the truth of God is openly revealed to all in the pages of Scripture. Believers can know all if they are willing to pursue God through the word He has given us.

Thank You, O God, for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, indwelling Your people and filling us with the ability to understand who You are and what Your intended purposes are for us. Thank You for this, and may we never take it for granted that Your good and Holy Spirit dwells in us when we, by faith, trusted in Christ the Lord. May You be praised by the lives we live for You. Amen.

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 1 John 2:21

The tense of the verb used here indicates that John is referring to this epistle and not the gospel he previously wrote. Not only that, it is more specifically referring to this particular section of the epistle – that dealing with the antichrists and their teachings. With that in mind, he says, “I have not written to you.” The intent is, “I have

not written to you as I have done.” It is an introductory thought for the words, “because you do not know the truth.”

He is fully confident that his audience does know the truth, and his writing was for an entirely different purpose than simply giving them instruction so that they can know the truth. Rather, his instruction will be that they can discern what that truth encompasses, and to further develop their understanding of it.

In other words, someone can know a truth – “This is a ball and it is blue.” However, knowing truth about a matter doesn’t mean a person knows all truth about that matter. “This is a faux pig-skin football that is dyed cerulean blue to match the school color of Kane High School in Farmer’s Branch, Texas.” Indeed, knowing this, there still may be any number of things that he doesn’t know about the ball. “It comes from Wang Chung, China. It was paid for by Seale Enterprises in Christchurch, New Zealand. It is guaranteed to not deflate for at least five minutes after first use. And so on.”

John is writing to those who know the truth about a truth they are aware of and understand. They “know” this truth, meaning they have apprehended it and are (hopefully) living according to it. As he next says, “but because you know it.”

As noted, John didn’t write the things he has written because they were unaware of what he was saying. Rather, they know – on some level – what he has said. Now, and with having inserted these words of introduction into his thought, he then completes the thought with, “and that no lie is of the truth.”

This is an interesting thought. The word *pseudos*, or lie, is actually not that common in the New Testament. It is only found 10 times, and the only time John has used it before this verse is in John 8:44 –

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

Even the verb form, *pseudomai*, is only found twelve times. The only time John has used it so far is in 1 John 1:6 –

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

As can be seen, John has been speaking of both antichrists – as well as light and darkness – in this chapter, corresponding to the lies of the devil and light and darkness in this verse. The themes – truth/lies, Christ/antichrist, light/darkness, etc., are all united in John’s mind. Therefore, what seems like a sudden, even abrupt, introduction of truth/lies isn’t that abrupt at all.

Simply defined, truth is that which corresponds to reality. Anything which does not correspond to reality, therefore, is untrue. It doesn’t matter how reasonable or plausible something may appear, if it does not actually correspond to reality, it is not truth. One can see the etymological similarity to our modern word “pseudo.” We have pseudo leather, for example. It may appear real, it may smell real, it may feel real, and so on, but if it is not leather, it is pseudo leather.

John is instructing his reader on truth, because there can only be one truth in theology. With this understanding, he will return to the subject of Christ/antichrist so that our level of truth (that which we already know) can be increased. We may already know the truth, but we may not know all of the truth. This is why John is writing. He is developing our thoughts through his understanding of the Incarnate Word of God – Jesus Christ – who is the embodiment of Truth.

Life application: John indicates that what he has written is not because his readers don’t know the truth, but that they know it. He has obviously already told it to them, and he is reminding them of it. Not only this, but there is no “secret” truth which is discernible to only a select few. Rather, God’s truth is available to us through His word, and we have that truth for individual and corporate study. We are not to be misled that we don’t have the truth available to us.

Further, the truth is that “no lie is of the truth.” As we saw, the devil is the father of lies and all lies stem from him. In contrast, God is absolute truth. Being fully God, Jesus claimed to be the embodiment of Truth. This being the case, His words, His gospel, and His Being are absolute truth. No lie comes from Him. Also, no lie is of Him, or about Him, as is recorded in the Bible. We have God’s complete and absolute word for the matters of faith and doctrine in the pages of the Holy Bible.

If you are confused about biblical matters, it is wise to get varying opinions from teachers, pastors, commentaries, and devotionals. But it is also wise to ask God to lead you to the truth of what is being analyzed. This is because there are so many interpretations of what is being said, but only one truth. We are individually responsible for our doctrine and, in the end, we stand or fall on the truth being revealed in the

pages of the Bible. If we get it wrong, we may end up in an unhappy spot on the day we face our Lord.

Yes Lord, please give us proper understanding concerning the contents of each and every passage we study. Let us not be misled by poor analyses of Your word, but rather may Your Spirit lead us to teachers who will provide us with a right understanding of the truth as You have relayed it. We ask these things so that our doctrine will be pure in Your eyes. Amen.

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22

In the previous verse, John stated, “no lie is of the truth.” Now, moving from that abstract thought, he makes a concrete example, forming his words into an interrogative – “Who is a liar...?” The Greek reads, “Who is the liar...?” Such a person is definitively identified by John in his question, “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” It is his way of emphasizing the matter. A denial of Jesus being the Messiah, meaning the Christ, is that which defines the antichrist.

John emphatically states this using a definite article in the Greek, literally: “the denying.” It is a present participle. A person who habitually denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is stated by John to be the antichrist, because he is denying the fundamental nature of who Jesus is and what that title signifies.

However, he then further defines this. The reason he does so is because of what being “Christ” involves. Anyone can, and indeed many do, call Jesus the Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons both make the claim, but what they (and many others) mean when they say “Christ” is completely different than what Scripture testifies to.

And so, to dispel any confusion concerning the nature of the Christ, John next says, “He is antichrist...” Again, there is an article in front of “antichrist.” It reads, “He is the antichrist.” That is followed with another article and a present participle, “the denying.” Therefore, the sentence from the Greek more literally reads, “He is the antichrist, the (one) denying the Father and the Son.”

It is the Father/Son relationship which defines “Christ.” Someone can say that Jesus is the Christ and have a completely different view of what “Christ” means. As noted, some are the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They claim that Jesus is a created being. To them, the

Father/Son relationship is not in actual begetting, but is rather a positional title, such as when Paul calls Timothy his “son” in the faith.

But this is not what Scripture testifies to. Scripture testifies that Jesus is born of God, and thus He is the incarnate Word of God – fully God and yet fully Man. A denial of this is a sign of the antichrist. Of this matter, Albert Barnes rightly states, “No man can have just views of God the Father who has not right apprehensions of the Son. As a matter of fact in the world, people have right apprehensions of God only when they have correct views of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

To know the Father, one must know the Son. Without knowing the Son, who reveals the unseen Father, one cannot know the Father. To claim to know the Father without acknowledging the Son is a lie. John has concretely stated this, following on from the words of Christ Jesus Himself –

⁷“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

⁸ Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?” John 14:7-9

Life application: John has talked of the different stages of believers – children, young men, and fathers. He then proceeded to state that it was the last hour because “many antichrists have come.” After this, he spoke of the anointing of the Holy One because “you know all things.” Everything he has been saying has been built upon the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and that any teaching contrary to this – even if the term “Son of God” is used – is the antichrist.

Gnostic heretics at the time of John claimed that Jesus was only a man who was indwelt by the spirit of Christ until the time of the crucifixion. This or any other attempt to diminish Jesus as the God/Man is in effect attempting to nullify the entire purpose and meaning of the writings of the New Testament. In turn, this diminishes the entire point of the Old Testament writings which lead up to the coming Christ – God incarnate.

One must ask the all-important question – “Is Jesus Christ fully God and at the same time fully Man?” If that question cannot be answered with an emphatic “Yes,” then that person has not called on Jesus as “Lord,” meaning God. He is still under the influence of Satan and remains in the body, not of Christ, but of the antichrist. According to John (and the rest of Scripture), it is that simple.

This same truth follows through with any of the other major points of doctrine – the Virgin Birth and the bodily resurrection of Jesus, for example. This might seem harsh, but it is given us by the apostle’s own hand under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God’s word is what matters, and it will hold up under the scrutiny of time and under the attacks of the devil. Who is Jesus Christ? It is the most important question you can ever answer and one which holds eternal consequences for all peoples of the world.

Lord God, Your word calls us to state where we stand on the Person of Jesus Christ when we receive the good news of the gospel. He is God incarnate – fully God and fully Man. He was born of a virgin, and His work fulfilled that of the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. We proclaim what the Bible proclaims, and because we have known Jesus, we also have known the Father. We proclaim Jesus as Lord! Amen.

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 1 John 2:23

John just noted that whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. He then stated that the one who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist. Now, he further clarifies this by saying, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.” What John is doing is slowly chipping away at all scenarios where people think they have the Father without the Son.

In this category, all religions that supposedly call on God as Father without going through the Son – because they deny Him – actually do not have the Father at all. This would include all Jews who deny the Son.

No Jew who says he believes in God, but does not believe in Jesus, has the Father. This also includes Muslims or any other religious expression that claims they have a connection with the monotheistic God, but who deny the Son. Deists would fall into this category, as would any other sect which denies the Son – meaning His relation to the Father, and which includes the thought of Jesus’ deity. As Jesus said –

“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”
John 5:23

The Father can only be worshiped, loved, and fellowshiped with through the Son. Without the Son, these cannot come to pass. With this understanding, and to reveal the all-inclusive nature of fellowship with the Father through the Son, John then says, “he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

All people who do not have the Son, also do not have the Father. But for any person who acknowledges the Son, they also have the Father. There is no division between the two, and in possessing one, the other is possessed, fully and completely within the possible parameters of such a relationship. In other words, this is speaking of the relationship. It does not mean that a person possesses all of the Father. If that were the case, the person would have to be God, because God is infinite. “Having,” as stated here, is to “have full access to.”

It is the Son who reveals the Father to man. In having the Son, there is – and there will be – an eternal unfolding (revealing) of the Father through the Son. The glory of God is fully accessible to the one who has the Son, and it shall be realized ceaselessly and endlessly because of this Father/Son relationship. Thank God for Jesus Christ who reveals the unseen Father to His elect.

Life application: John has made it absolutely clear – either one accepts Jesus Christ or he does not have any access to God the Father. In a denial of the Son, you forfeit your right to become a child of God and, as Paul says elsewhere, God’s wrath remains on you.

These verses may seem redundant or cumbersome, but that is the farthest thing from the truth. John is spending this time and detail because people were already attempting to diminish the work of Jesus. Since then, these attempts have become more pronounced and exacting in nature. For every subtle heresy which is refuted, a new attempt arises to claim the Bible is true, and yet its truths are manipulated to refute the very truths it proclaims.

One must proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, meaning both God and Man, or he has no part with the Father. There is no middle ground and no room for compromise. Where do you stand on this most important of all issues?

Heavenly Father, we pray for all those whose eyes are blinded to the truth of who Jesus Christ is. May Your glorious Holy Spirit move in a great way upon the earth, calling many from darkness to the splendid Light of Your Son – our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for the full and perfect fellowship we can have with You because of what You have done through Him! Amen.

Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 1
John 2:24

The Greek of this verse begins with the word “you” in the emphatic position, thus saying, “As for you...” This is then a verse of contrast to the previous two verses which began with “Who is the liar?” and “Whoever denies the Son.”

Instead of being counted among those who are of the spirit of antichrist, John is speaking to those who heard the truth of the gospel message and cling to it, live in it, and won’t be moved from it. With that understanding, it more rightly states, “As for you, what you heard from the beginning – in you let it abide.” John is telling them to remember that very message. But hearing and remembering isn’t enough.

Even those antichrists had heard the truth of the gospel and they also remembered. The difference is that they didn’t let it abide in them. It is one thing to have head knowledge, and it is a completely different thing to move that knowledge to a belief deep in your soul. This is why John next says, “If what you heard from the beginning abides in you.” There are countless people who have heard the truth, and they have had it explained to them. And yet, they reject the Son in varying degrees, but the key point of their rejection is a denial of the Father/Son relationship. In denying this, they deny Christ’s deity. John says that if that principle point of doctrine abides in you, “you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

As is commonly seen in the New Testament, the tenets of dwelling with, believing in, and acknowledging the Son are directly linked to doing the same with the Father (and the Holy Spirit also). It is interesting to note the order of verses 2:22, 23, and 24 –

He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.
Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either.
...you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

In denying the Father/Son relationship the person is an antichrist – meaning opposed to what God is doing in the redemptive plans of mankind. Therefore, if one denies the Son – meaning His deity – he does not have the Father. However, in accepting the truth of God in Christ Jesus, one abides in the Son. In abiding in the Son, one abides in the Father. It is Christ who makes this possible, and without Christ Jesus, it is impossible. The knowledge of the Father is linked directly to an acknowledgment of the Son.

John Gill wisely points out that these words are not acceptable to justify a loss of salvation. Rather, he says that “what is here said is not either the cause or condition of men being in the Father, and in the Son, or of their continuance in them, but is descriptive of the persons that are in them, and is an open and manifest evidence of

their being and continuance in them. Such are in union with Christ, and at times enjoy sensible communion with him, and shall never be finally and totally removed from it.”

Life application: Concerning the members of the Godhead, to fellowship with one is to fellowship with all. To reject one is to reject all. It is no different than saying, “I believe that Clint Eastwood exists, but I don’t believe he existed yesterday and if he is alive tomorrow, I won’t believe he is the same person that is alive today.”

The entire thought process is mentally unsound and can only be attributed to an unstable person. The Bible proclaims the Father is God. The Bible proclaims Jesus is God. The Bible proclaims the Holy Spirit is God. Therefore, to reject any member is to deny the reliability of the Bible and completely blow any chance of proper faith in what God has clearly presented.

Lord God, we trust that Jesus is our Lord and that He is the Savior of mankind. He reveals the Father to us. We may not completely understand the doctrine of the Trinity, but we accept it by faith. We believe it because it is what the Bible presents. As the Bible is Your written word, we accept what is revealed there. Hallelujah! You have given us Your word, and it is our honor to accept it as such. Amen.

And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. 1 John 2:25

John has just spoken concerning the knowledge of the Father/Son relationship, showing that in acknowledging the Son, a person “has the Father also.” From there, he counseled his readers to let that thought abide in them. With that in mind, he then tells the benefit of what acknowledging the Son means by saying, “And this is the promise that He has promised us.”

The Greek word translated as promise, is commonly used in the New Testament, and almost always it speaks of God’s promises, “and hence guaranteed by His own eternal Law (Being)” HELPS Word Studies. As this is based on His own eternal Law, it is sure to come to pass. When a promise of God is made, it is an eternal edict. Promises, however, can be conditional, as is this one, which is “eternal life.” The Greek reads, “the life, the eternal.”

This is an emphatic way of describing the nature of the promise, and it stems from Jesus’ words of John 3 (and elsewhere in John) –

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:14-16

As can be seen, the nature of the promise is conditional – “whoever believes.” The promise is given, and if the conditions are met, that which is promised is received. Paul then shows the result of receiving the promise in Ephesians 1 –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

Paul, using the same word translated as “promise,” says that believers are “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” In other words, the guaranteed promise is received through belief, and a sealing of that person is made. This sealing is then said by Paul to be “the guarantee of our inheritance.”

As this is an eternal decree of God, and as it is then sealed as a guarantee by God with the third member of the Godhead, it then demonstrates, without any possibility of change, that “the promise, the eternal” (the original Greek) can never be revoked. The eternal life is an eternal guarantee. If it were not so, then –

- 1) The conditions for the promise (that of belief) were not true.
- 2) The grant of the promise is not a gift, because a gift is only a gift if given away forever.
- 3) The guarantee which comes with the promise is not a guarantee at all.
- 4) God made a mistake in sealing the person in the first place (a thing which is impossible).
- 5) Man has the ability to override God’s eternal decrees. Thus, this eternal decree of God is dependent on man’s effort, and it is therefore not eternal.

These are but a few of the ramifications if the received promise can be revoked. In the end, it cannot be that salvation (receiving the promise and being granted eternal life) is anything but eternal.

Life application: There are two great hopes for the faithful Christian. The first and preeminent hope is for us to see the beauty of the Lord and to dwell in His perfect

goodness for all eternity. No higher aspiration should fill the soul of the believer, and no occurrence for the ages to come, will compare to the moment it comes. Second to that, but which is wrapped up in it, is the promise of eternal life. The promise, as stated here, is emphatic and it will come to pass because God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2).

When John says, “And this is the promise that He has promised us,” he may further have been thinking of Jesus’ words as recorded in John 17:3 – “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” This is not only an unending existence, but it is also a quality-of-life existence we can experience now. The reason for this is that, because of the sure promise of God, we have an internal hope which can (if only we will allow it to) pervade our very person.

When we fix our eyes on Jesus and what He has done, we can have every confidence that what He promises will also come about. If we consider this unmovable and sure foundation, then our lives now will also be unmovable and sure – even through trials, difficulties, and sadness.

Let us take a firm stand in our convictions and radiate to the world that we have a hope they should long for. We should be so content in our position in Christ that everyone who knows us will also want to know Him. May He be glorified through our hope of eternal life!

“One *thing* I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple.” Psalm 27:4

There is no greater hope than that of seeing Your beauty, O Lord. And we know that when we do, our failings will be removed and forever taken away, leaving a soul acceptable to dwell in Your Light for all eternity. We send You our love and our highest praise this day for being the faithful God who will never fail to keep every promise! Amen.

These things I have written to you concerning those who *try* to deceive you.

1 John 2:26

John's words now turn to an explanation of his words of the previous verses by saying, "These things I have written to you." This is most especially concerning those who would teach the false doctrines of antichrist (especially verses 18-23) and how to avoid their false teaching. The preeminent thought of his words was that of the Father/Son relationship between God and Jesus Christ.

John's words clearly and unambiguously state that unless one has the Son, he does not have the Father. Denying the Son is the doctrine of antichrist, and it is what John is referring to. He has written these things as a warning "concerning those who *try* to deceive you."

The word "try" is inserted by the translators, and it would have been better to leave it out. Though John will show in the next verse that believers are secure in their relationship with Christ, it does not mean that they cannot be deceived.

The term "deceive" here indicates someone who would actively "seduce" or "lead astray" others who are in the congregation. John uses a present participle which more accurately says, "those who are leading you astray." This is the constant habit of such false teachers. They not only teach unsound doctrine, but they continue to do so. They are always leading people astray. This is because they do not have either the Father or the Son. As such, they belong to the devil, and it is his *modus operandi* to deceive.

John's words seem to indicate that there was, even in the church he was addressing, those who were attempting to, but had not yet, led members away from the sound gospel. His epistle then is not only an attempt to clarify and instill doctrine, but it is a plea to hold to it and to not be led astray by people – either in the church or in another congregation – who were actively seducing believers with false teachings.

Life application: It is important to note, especially in today's world, that these deceivers aren't just waiting in the shadows of the church, but are out in the open teaching heresies, false doctrines, and watered-down truths right on the internet, and even on Christian television. It cannot be stressed enough that if you don't read and study your Bible, you are setting yourself up for manipulation by such people. How can you determine the truth or a lie, if you don't know how to properly analyze verses which are thrown out at you by deceivers?

Understanding the context of a verse is absolutely essential to understanding the meaning of that verse. But a false teacher knows that most people don't know the context of the verse, and therefore he can casually toss out any verse and claim his use

of it is under the authority of “the Word of God.” But... this is exactly what Satan did when he tempted Jesus. He used the Scriptures in an attempt to mislead Jesus. Fortunately, Jesus knows the Scriptures far better than the devil, being the very Author of them.

It cannot be stated enough – read your Bible, study your Bible, and remember your Bible so that you will be safe from the active and persistent attacks of false teachers who would lead you astray for their own evil intentions.

Lord God, we have been far too negligent in our personal study time in Your word. Give us the wise discernment to understand that the rest of the movie on the DVD can wait, the baseball scores will be posted tomorrow, the playtime can be ended earlier, and so on. Whatever the distraction – it is not nearly as important as studying Your precious word. May we take this to heart today. Amen.

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. 1 John 2:27

Here John now makes a positive statement concerning believers, as he did in verse 2:2. It begins with an emphatic “you” in it. The verb is in the aorist tense as well. The Greek more precisely reads, “And you, the anointing you received.”

It is a fact that occurred, and its effects continue on. With that emphatic and sure statement made, he then says, “from Him.” It is speaking of the anointing which comes from the Anointed One, Christ Jesus. By faith in Christ, one is anointed with the Spirit of Christ. John says this anointing from Him “abides in you.”

The tense of the verb is present. It is an ongoing thing with continuing effects. As Albert Barnes rightly notes, “...it is an incorruptible seed, and a living principle, which can never be destroyed, notwithstanding all the corruptions in a man’s heart, the pollutions of the world, and the temptations of Satan.”

Man is fallen and lives in a fallen body, but when man comes to Christ, he is treated by God as if he is already glorified, even though the corruption of this world continues on in Him. Through God’s unconditional decree, the man is anointed, and he remains anointed until the day he is brought to the final state of glorification. This is a work of

God and it is accomplished in God's mind. John then says of this state, "and you do not need that anyone teach you."

These words are taken to unhealthy extremes by Christians who are unwilling to spend the time necessary to learn theology. Depending on a verse such as this to justify a specially revealed knowledge placed actively into their mind by the Holy Spirit is not what this is referring to. Rather, John himself is providing teaching and instruction (and he will continue to do so) in this epistle. Further, nobody has knowledge without studying and contemplating things.

One will not, and cannot, know the book of Romans unless he reads it. John here is saying that it is the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, who provides proper doctrine. John's letter is just such a means of obtaining that, as are all the words of Scripture. Believers do not need anyone to tell us the doctrines of God – salvation, justification, right and holy living, and so on. Rather, God tells us those things through His word. We have received the anointing of the Lord, and it is the Lord who has given us His word. That is where we go to find instruction.

With this understood, John continues with, "but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things." There is a slight variation in some texts here which reads, "His anointing." That would mean "Christ's anointing." As it says in the first clause, "from Him," and because it is speaking of Christ, this is to be understood with either text.

It is the anointing of Christ which teaches us all things concerning salvation – both immediate and in its eternal effects. It is that word which was received by John and the other apostles, and which is carefully laid out in Scripture. In this anointing, which came through calling on Christ, John next says, "and is true, and is not a lie."

This is taking the reader back to verse 22, which said, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" There is the true anointing, and there are false teachings. The true anointing comes from the acceptance that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus fully God. This is the truth of God in Christ, and it is not the lie of the antichrist.

In the acceptance of who God is in Christ, the person is anointed with His anointing, and he now has no need for anyone to teach him. He has been taught, and he has moved to God in Christ, and he has been given eternal life. This is then confirmed by John as he closes the verse with, "and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."

There is another variation in texts here. Instead of “you will abide,” it says, “you abide.” It is present indicative. You do abide, and you will continue to abide. This seems the preferable reading based on his other words of surety. The action is complete, its effects are ongoing, and the person has been granted eternal life. This is the truth of God in Christ. It is not a dubious hope which may be lost through man’s efforts or failings. Rather, it is a surety which is provided to the one who trusts in God’s offer of Jesus Christ.

Life application: There is one baptism into the Holy Spirit, and only one. This comes the moment a person truly believes in his heart that Jesus is Lord. For someone to speak about a “Holy Spirit Baptism” apart from this occurrence is to completely misunderstand what happens in the believer. Paul sums up this doctrine in Ephesians 1:13 –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...”

Because of the baptism (seal) of the Holy Spirit, believers have received the permanent and eternal anointing. The Spirit of God – the Spirit of Christ – becomes a part of their existence. The Holy Spirit convicts us of wrong doctrine, but He doesn’t force right doctrine on us. We must follow His leading to determine truth. If we reject the leading, our doctrine will falter.

In order to ensure we stay in tune with His wishes, the second thing we must do after His baptism is to be filled – a repeatable occurrence – with Him. When we are disobedient and sin, the Holy Spirit’s filling decreases. When we live for Christ, we are filled anew. This is the working of the Spirit and it is through this process that we learn to determine truth from falsehood. The truth we learn will abide in us because of the power of God through the working of His Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O God, for the baptism of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You that You would condescend to dwell, even in us, and to lead us to all truth as is revealed in Your precious word! Fill us today and each day with Your Spirit as we open ourselves to You through study, prayer, fellowship, and praise so that we will be exemplary students in the knowledge provided in the pages of the Holy Bible! Amen.

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. 1 John 2:28

Here we begin a new section of thought with the words “and now.” Again, John calls his readers his “little children,” using the endearing word *teknia*. It is an address to all levels of ability and knowledge, but as if they were his own dear possession.

He next asks them to “abide in Him,” meaning Christ, which is certainly referring to keeping His commandments as is indicated in verse 6 and elsewhere, and by living in the love previously mentioned, such as in verse 10. In doing so, John says that “when He appears.” Some manuscripts say, “if He appears,” meaning in the stream of time, not in whether it will happen or not. In other words, it would be like saying, “If He comes today.” The change in texts from “when” to “if” does not substantially change the intent. Either way, the Lord is coming, and when that occurs – if we are abiding in Him – “we may have confidence.”

The Greek word is *parrésia*, or “boldness.” It is what one has when speaking in a public forum, openly and without shame or shying away. This particular word was used to note the free citizens who lived in Athens and who were permitted to speak in the assembly with confidence about whatever was on their mind. By abiding in Christ, there will be a boldness that the life lived in faith will have been well spent. Such will “not be ashamed before Him.”

The regret of not abiding in Christ will be made manifest in each believer who failed to abide in Him, and it will be made manifest in each non-believer who claimed they belonged to Him, but who did not abide in Him. John is obviously writing to believers (little children), and he is including himself in these words (we). Therefore, his words are directed most specifically to those who are believers, but who have not faithfully remained in Him as they should have. For them (is this applicable to any of us?), we shall be in a state of shame “before Him at His coming.”

John’s words, like those of the other apostles, and indeed Christ Himself, show that He really is coming again. It is not a dubious hope or promise, but it is the truth of God in Christ. He is coming, and we need to be ready at all times for His appearance. In this, we will be found acceptable for reward and not loss.

Life application: If we live for Christ Jesus in this life, we will be able to speak with complete confidence when we stand in His presence for judgment. However, if we fail to do these things we will be just like a child caught with his hand in the candy jar. We will feel the guilt and the remorse at being caught completely unready for the glory which He intends to bestow upon us.

As the wording of the rapture, which is explained by Paul, indicates no set time or day, it is no different than the moment of our death. It will happen when it happens, and it would be good for us to be about His business when the moment occurs in our lives.

Should we die doing something naughty, we will awaken ashamed of our last moment on earth. Likewise, if we are acting in an inappropriate way when He comes for His church, we will have been found to be living foolishly. As you live out your days, remember the cross of Jesus and what He endured to purchase you from this world. Live in a manner which is wholly fitting and honoring to Him.

Dear Lord, give us the sense and discernment to live properly until Your return. Let us be found living our lives in a pleasing manner which will bring a smile from You, and not a state of shame in us, when You call us home. This we ask that You will be glorified by the lives we lead. Amen.

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. 1 John 2:29

John now pens the last verse of the chapter. It forms a connector between two larger thoughts – the coming of Christ and the righteousness of Christ. John will deal with the latter issue in great detail as he continues this marvelous epistle. The words of the previous verse spoke of not being ashamed at Christ's coming by abiding in Him. Now, to form that connective bridge to the new direction, he says, "If you know that He is righteous."

There is, as at other times, a question as to who the subject is here. Is it Jesus, or is it God? The reason is that it is Jesus who was just referred to in the previous verse. However, John will next refer to being "born of Him." That is an act he always ties in with God – being "born" of God.

The debate is unnecessary. Jesus is God. John is dealing with the God/Man. He is not dealing merely with a human that he met along the path of life. He is speaking of Jesus Christ, and in the thought of "Christ" is the concept of both His humanity and His deity. Therefore, the One who is coming in His humanity is also the One who begets children in His deity.

This One is righteous. It is impossible to know God and not know that righteousness is a character which defines His very nature. The gospel itself implies this. Christ died for our sins. If we have sin, it is because we are unrighteous. If God sent Christ to die for our

unrighteousness, then He must be righteous. John says that if you know this, “you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”

There is a difference between the verbs translated as “know” in the first and second clauses. The first is *eidó*, and it signifies the ability to mentally grasp something. The second is *ginóskó*, and it speaks of an experiential knowledge. He is saying that if you can mentally grasp and understand that He is righteous, you will then be able to perceive through the application of that knowledge that those who practice righteousness do so because of their unique, God-birthed connection.

It is also possible that the verb is to be taken as an imperative. “If you know that He is righteous, you are also to know (actively understand) that those who practice righteousness are born of Him. The verb can be taken either way, and either way the point is that in understanding the righteousness of God in Christ, each person in Christ is also to conduct himself in righteousness. In this practicing of righteousness, a person shows that he “is born of Him.”

The verb here is in the perfect tense. It more appropriately reads, “has been begotten of Him.” A person who has been begotten of God is to conduct his life as if that is the case. It is contrary to being born of God to continue in the life that he lived before coming to God.

As a simple example, albeit not intended as a perfect one, if someone has a computer which is not connected to the internet, it will perform its functions based on its limited reach, and it will only work within those parameters. But if that computer is hooked up to a modem and is made internet-capable, it would be pointless for it to continue to operate as it once did. There is a new standard expected of it, and a new hope for it to reach out and operate as a part of a greater whole.

When one comes to God through Christ, he is to reflect the change that has taken place in him, and he is to conduct his affairs by this new standard. The reason for this verse is now understandable when connected to the previous verse. Obviously, John is teaching us that in practicing righteousness, we will not be ashamed at His coming – the very point that he stated in the previous verse. We are to “abide in Him,” and we are to practice righteousness, for this very reason.

Life application: John’s words here present a complex thought which is actually rather hard to follow. When it says, “If you know that He is righteous,” it is speaking of Jesus based on the context of the preceding verse. It also makes sense because the

righteousness of God should be taken as an axiom. As this is so, then it must be speaking of Jesus' human nature and the righteousness He demonstrated, proving His character and validating His position as the Christ.

Understanding this, we can then move to the next concept – “everyone who practices righteousness.” Being a present tense verb, it indicates practicing righteousness habitually or constantly. Immediately after this, John says that anyone who does practice (habitually) righteousness is born of Him.

With this refresher added to the main analysis of the verse, let us simply apply it to our own lives. Let us constantly apply the righteousness of God in Christ to our walk before Him. Each step that we take, we are to consider it in the light of the holiness of God, and to then move onto the next step with that same thought in mind. Step by step, we are to walk in righteousness – to the glory of God, and as it is displayed in our lives.

Lord God, surely Your word gives us wonders to consider and to learn. Thank You for challenging our understanding of the Person and work of Jesus as well as the role of the Father and the Holy Spirit. May we be given eyes and understanding to properly evaluate Your word so that we don't fall into error as we study. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 1 John 3:1

Chapter 3 begins with a resounding cry of wonder and delight, “Behold.” The emotion of the word comes from the surrounding context. At times, it can simply indicate seeing or perceiving something with the eyes. However, John is calling out more than that as he adds on to it –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.”

In this, he is asking his reader to open their spiritual eyes and see something that is as real and sure as the ground under one’s feet, and yet it is something that can only be mentally perceived. God has sent His Son as a Gift, and in the sending of His Son, He has become “Father” to those who have received Jesus. The Father of the Godhead, through Christ Jesus, has become our Father in the faith.

This giving of the Son is described by John as a “manner of love.” The word translated as “manner” signifies a kind or sort. It originally referred to the race or tribe one belonged to. Therefore, it is a distinct kind, set apart from other kinds of love. And that love is “that we should be called children of God.”

The word translated as “called” does not mean a divine calling, but rather a naming. We are “named” children of God. As such, being named as children is speaking of adoption, as Paul also describes, such as in Galatians 4:5 and elsewhere. When a father adopts a child, he is bringing that child into his family, naming him in that capacity. It is a way of saying, “I am bestowing upon you all the rights and privileges of any other son in my family.” As Jesus Christ is God’s only begotten Son, the implication is astonishing. God the Father has bestowed a name upon us which signifies a relationship that places us along with His own Son.

The love of the Father for the Son is now extended to the children of adoption. Note that John uses the term *teknon*, or “children,” and not the word *huios*, or son. The body of believers is gathered as the Father lavishes His love on them – regardless of any other distinction. It is a touching note of endearment for those who are now His.

However, because of this, John then shows a distinction between those who belong to the Father and those who do not by saying, “Therefore the world does not know us.” The world, the ordered system which stands opposed to God, has no fraternal bond with the Father. Because of this, it has no such fraternal bond with the children.

In this, there is no understanding of who the children of God actually are. Anyone can claim that he is a child of God, but without understanding how God makes this possible, it is an empty claim. When God sent Christ, He made the relationship possible. But it is only in Christ that it is so. Without knowing the Son, one cannot know the Father. And without knowing the Father, the world cannot ascertain, or mentally perceive, the true status of the children. As John further states, “because it did not know Him.”

Jesus said, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (John 5:23). He also said, “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” Jesus is the Light. In understanding who He is, and in stepping into His revealed light, one can then understand the Father, and become a son of light. Without this occurring, those of the world remain in darkness, and they cannot know the Father. Only through Christ Jesus is this made possible.

Life application: For those who understand the nature of God, the state of fallen man, and the importance of the work of Jesus Christ, it is immensely sad to hear non-Christians say, “We’re all children of God.” This is because such a statement fundamentally misunderstands the unhappy state they remain in. It also fails to understand the wrath God feels toward sin. Were it not so, God would never have sent His Son, our Lord Jesus, to the cross. But sin necessitates such a sacrifice. There is one overlying truth about sin – *Either the sin in man is judged, or the man is judged in sin.*

To judge the sin in man means that a Substitute took the place of the sin. The only acceptable substitute is another man (animals are in a different category). But another man is unacceptable if he too has sin. Thus, we see our need for Jesus – the sinless Son of God. Paul explains the transfer in 2 Corinthians 5:21 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

When one understands these thoughts on sin, then he can taste a glimpse of John’s exuberant proclamation. Behold! What manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!

It is at the very edge of our ability to grasp, and actually beyond our ability to fully appreciate, what happened on the cross of Jesus Christ. The significance of that act is more incredible than anything else in all of time and throughout all of creation. And it occurred for a good and beautiful purpose – that we should be called children of God. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God who takes away our sin. Man need not be judged in sin. Rather, the sin in man has been judged for those who come to Christ Jesus.

We marvel at the perfection of Your glorious work, O Christ. May we never tire of telling the story of Your life, Your cross, and Your victory over death. May we never fail to proclaim Your majesty all the days of our unworthy lives. To You, O God, be the honor and glory – now and forever! Amen.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2

John began the chapter with joyous words concerning the love of the Father. Because of the love He has bestowed on us we are now “called children of God.” He repeats the thought again by saying, “Beloved, now we are the children of God.” It is a statement of surety, and it is a statement which reflects the completed nature of the matter. The adoption in Christ is complete. We possess a position that has the highest dignity, glory, and honor that can be granted, because we have been adopted into the family of God.

John continues with, “and it has not been revealed what we shall be.” With a simple connecting of the two clauses by the word “and,” he reveals both the state of believers now while confirming that this state is not the fulfillment of what being children of God entails – “We are, and yet we wait for what we will be.”

As an example of this dual state of believers, we can think of someone who has completed all that is necessary for a college diploma. The courses have been taken, the achievement has been realized, and yet there still awaits the formal ceremony to complete the degree. At this point, one could say, “I am a graduate of Nolan University.” And yet, until the ceremony is complete, and the certificate is received, the happiness of the bestowal, and the blessing of what accompanies that bestowal, lies yet ahead.

We can only speculate on the wondrous state that lies ahead, but it is already guaranteed to come about. However, our speculation is not without a set hope as seen in John’s next words, “but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him.” Whatever the eternal state of believers is, it will be like that of Jesus Himself.

The Greek word, translated as “like,” has the same meaning as our English word. It is to be like, similar to, resembling, the same as, etc. The change from our mortal bodies will be into bodies that resemble that of Jesus. As this is so, we can be certain that it will be beyond anything we can imagine.

If the Lord of all creation has a body suitable for all eternity, and as it lacks nothing to enjoy all that He has for Himself, and if we will be like Him, then we will be able to enjoy all of that which God reveals of Himself for all eternity. Bengel says it “suggests something unspeakable, contained in the likeness of God.”

To ensure that we are able to comprehend this, even if on a limited scale, John completes the thought with, “for we shall see Him as He is.” The thought is similar to that of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 –

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

There appears to be a connection between seeing the Lord and being transformed into the likeness of the Lord. At this time, we “see the Lord,” through His word, and we are being transformed into His likeness because of it. When He comes, we will “see the Lord” in a more complete way, and we will be transformed into His likeness in a comparable way at that time.

Paul, speaking of the dual nature of our conversion (that which is and that which will be as existing at the same time), says this in Philippians 3 –

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Philippians 3:20, 21

Our citizenship is in heaven (it is complete), and yet we wait for our transformation (it lies ahead). The doctrine of eternal salvation is written all over the thoughts of these apostolic writings. Further, like the words of John, Paul tantalizes his reader with a thought concerning this coming transformation. This state, yet to be revealed, and yet which is already guaranteed to those who believe, is also spoken of by him in 1 Corinthians 15 –

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”
1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Life application: Our present state is adoption as sons through the work of Jesus and not any meritorious action on our part. We have not personally seen Christ and we have not yet (and cannot in this life) attain His sinless perfection or glorification. However, in a lesser sense, it has been revealed.

The book of Revelation is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. In the first chapters, we behold his glory through the eyes and pen of John. At the end of the book, we see where we will dwell and what it will be like – all a foretaste for us of the glory to come. When we are made like Him, there won’t only be a physical change, but a spiritual change as well. This change involves purity, a sinless state, and the attainment of true righteousness – all spoken of in the verses ahead.

These changes, both physical and spiritual, will be fully realized at the rapture of the church. Yes, the rapture is real. It is clearly laid out in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Even now, we are “partakers of the divine nature” as indicated in 2 Peter 1:4. However, when John says, “we shall be like Him,” this denotes similarity, not a completely identical state. To see the consistency of God’s word as brought to us by the various apostles, we can return to Paul’s words of 1 Corinthians 15 where he describes what “we shall be like Him” means –

And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Take time to read the entire context of Paul's words today. They are found in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Jesus, we simply can't wait for the day that we will be like You. Amen.

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 John 3:3

John just spoke of the hope of the believer. It is that "we shall be like Him." He now says, "And everyone who has this hope in Him." The word "everyone" is certainly used in order to refute some heresy which had already begun to invade the church, even at this early date. It is a way of saying, "Every single person, and this means every single one of you as well..." He is actually addressing each individual, but he is making the exhortation in a universal manner.

In the Greek, the placing of one's hope for this statement is "on Him," rather than "in Him." Saying "in him" is ambiguous. Is it speaking of the person hoping, or is it speaking of the object of the hope? For this reason, the "hope" is set "on" Christ Jesus. Vincent's Word Studies notes that this is the only reference by John concerning Christian hope. That is unlike Paul who speaks of it again and again. Further, Vincent's notes that this is the Bible's only instance where hope is "on" rather than "in" Jesus. John's specific wording calls for specificity of translation.

John continues by saying that whoever has this hope on Christ "purifies himself." The word translated as "purifies" is in the present tense and therefore indicates continual purification. It is used in John and Acts when referring to external purification under the Law of Moses. However, under the New Covenant, we see that those external purifications were intended to point to internal purification in the believer in Christ. It is used in James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:22, and here in 1 John 3:3 – all when speaking of internal purification.

John said in the previous verse that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This is what he is now referring to. We are to purify ourselves "just as He is pure." Here, John uses an adjective form of the same word. It is one used by Paul, James, Peter, and John, and it signifies being without any type of ceremonial defilement, and thus holy and sacred.

Life application: Because John's plea is to the individual, but universally applied, the message it carries is universally applicable. If you hope in the One who is pure, you must

also purify yourself. And, this is not a one-time deal, after which one is pure always. We are to continually cleanse ourselves of our impurities, because of the hope we have in Jesus.

As noted, the idea behind the purity is that of ritual cleansing, or ceremonial purification before coming into the presence of God. This is explained in Exodus (and elsewhere) in the Old Testament, and in Hebrews in the New. Believers need to have the whole person free from defilement in this purification process. How to accomplish this purification will be dealt with in the verses to come, but it particularly deals with righteousness and love.

We need to ensure we have both qualities working in an appropriate manner, or we simply can't be pure in the way we need to be. Let us look to the words of the psalmist to see a portion of what's needed to please God –

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.” Psalm 24:3, 4

Lord God, we look to You for the necessary cleansing required to make us pure. Though we try under our own power, we will only fail. But by appealing to You and applying the instruction found in Your word, we know that we can be purified and cleansed – thus being acceptable as personal offerings to You. May this come about for Your great glory as we stand before You in thanks and praise! Amen.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

1 John 3:4

John just mentioned that everyone who has the hope of Christ purifies himself. He now brings in a thought which supports that thinking by saying, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness.” The Greek word, translated as “commit,” signifies “to do.” It says that whoever does the sin also does the lawlessness.

As Vincent's Word Studies notes, “The phrase to do sin regards sin as something actually realized in its completeness. He that does sin realizes in action the sin (note the article τὴν) that which includes and represents the complete ideal of sin. Compare do righteousness, 1 John 2:29.”

The law gives precepts, commands, exhortations, and etc. These are given for right living and for holiness. To fail to be obedient to these things is sin. Speaking of the law, meaning whatever law is applicable, Paul says –

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:19, 20

It is by law that we have a knowledge of sin. When under law, it is by that law that we are to conduct ourselves as people. In not being obedient to the expectations of the law, we fall into error. In the case of the Law of Moses, John then explains that error by saying, “and sin is lawlessness.” Again, there are articles used by John, so it more accurately reads, “and the sin is the lawlessness.” He is making declarations about the nature of what occurred and the result of it.

Understanding this, we can take 1 John 2:29 and place it side by side with this verse (in a literal translation) –

...everyone the doing the righteousness of Him has been begotten.

Everyone the doing the sin also the lawlessness does, and the sin is the lawlessness. John is making a one-to-one comparison between being in Christ, and not being in Christ. This is certain because of what he will say in the coming verses. One is either in Christ and does what is righteous, or he is not in Christ and does what is lawless. Until the next two verses are evaluated, one cannot fully see what John is relaying. The context must be maintained.

Life application: The tense of the first half of this verse indicates the idea of someone committing sin continually and as much as possible. Think of it in this way, “Everyone who sins also practices lawlessness.” It is the state of all human beings born of Adam.

We are born in sin and our state is one of actively falling short of God’s standards and committing lawlessness in a continual fashion; it is our very nature. For someone to say, “I’ve never sinned,” is simply unimaginable when put in the context of our fallen nature. We sin, not just once or twice in a lifetime, but continually throughout our existence.

In the second half of the verse, we have an additional confirmation of this. Because of the use of an article with both words, the terms are interchangeable – sin is lawlessness

and lawlessness is sin. Either way, this is an apt description of the state of sin and lawlessness. The word for “sin” is what most Christians would describe as “missing the mark.” It is as if one is shooting arrows and not hitting the target. The word for “lawlessness,” however, normally points to much deeper offenses which are the purposeful and intentional violation or neglect of God’s laws.

John may have added the second half of the verse to show the recipients (and we who still receive the letter today) that we simply cannot hide from the minor offenses as if they were unimportant. They carry the same mark of rebellion against God as do the weightier matters which we attempt to avoid committing. By doing so, we think we can stand and say, “See the good life I’ve been living. The bad things I’ve done aren’t really bad at all.”

Rather, the little offenses are lawlessness and rebellion just as are the big ones. They all put a wall between us and God and necessitate a sacrifice. Thank God for Jesus... our only hope from the life we have lived.

O God, it is hard to imagine the displeasing lives we have lived after seeing sin for what it truly is. When we recognize what it means in relation to You, we can look back on our lives and see that the little sinful things we have done are really much worse than we thought. And so, we look to the cross, we cling to the cross, and we thank YOU for the cross which takes away our sin... all of our sin. Thank You for Jesus. Amen.

And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 1 John 3:5

John just stated that when one sins, he commits lawlessness, and that “sin is lawlessness.” This is the default state of all mankind, because all are in Adam, our first ancestor. In order to correct this, and to move us from a state of lawlessness to a state of being right with God, John now says, “And you know that He was manifested.”

The idea here is that Christ already existed in God, and that He came from God on a mission. Hence, the term “manifested.” It is the incarnation which was necessary for us to be made right with God. The way this was accomplished was that He was sent “to take away our sins.”

John is presenting this thought to support the idea that all of what occurred in Christ’s coming was to resolve the sin problem in our lives. As this is so, sin is deplorable to God and, therefore, we are to keep ourselves from sin, not bask in it and revel in it. As Christ

came to take away our sins, and as a part of Christ's mission was to suffer and die on the cross for our sins, then we should not only desire to live in a holy manner, but we should tirelessly strive to do so. The consequences of our actions are what necessitated His cross.

In saying that He came to "take away our sins," John uses the plural, "sins." This then speaks of everything included in the term. No sin is exempted from the sufficiency of what Christ has done. It tells us that Jesus didn't just come in the flesh to atone for sin, but to remove the power of sin in our lives. Both are possible because of His sacrifice combined with His continued influence on our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

To understand what has occurred in the cross of Christ, God gave a foreshadowing of it in the Day of Atonement rituals which are found in Leviticus 16. A full analysis of this rite is found in three sermons. A link to the first of those three sermons can be viewed by clicking: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#).

In short, the main focus of the day is centered on two hairy goats, one is a sacrifice for sin, and the second is to expiate, or carry away the sin. Both of these animals (and everything else associated with the rites of that day) prefigure the Person and work of Christ.

The truth of what is found in that ritual is first seen in John's concluding word of this verse, "and in Him there is no sin." The Greek reads, "and sin in Him not there is." He is absolutely and forever without sin. That is seen in the innocent goat which came to die in the place of the people. But, in dying for sin, it means that the sin of the people was placed upon it.

From there, the second goat pictured that sin being carried away, never to return again. This second goat became a sin-bearer. The thought of what these two goats did is explained by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21 –

"For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus Christ was made sin (the transfer to the sacrificial goat). He died in that capacity. But because He had no sin of His own, in His death, He carried away our sin (the scapegoat). The sin can never return because it died with Him. Speaking for believers,

Paul says that through Christ, the embodiment of the law, “I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.”

The sin is removed in Christ’s death, it is carried away to the grave in death, and it is forever removed through the resurrection. In this, we can now live to God. It is made possible through Jesus because He was sinless, and He is forever sinless.

Life application: In Christ, these two actions can be simply described. The first action, atonement, takes away the penalty of our sin and is known as “justification.” In this action we are declared not guilty because the punishment has been meted out on our Substitute, Jesus.

The second action, taking away the power of sin in our lives, is known as “sanctification.” It is accomplished by Christ, and we are sanctified unto God. However, during this life, we can (and should) go through a process of personal sanctification where we conduct ourselves in a manner which is in accord with what Christ has done for us.

This aspect of our walk is, unfortunately, not pursued by many saved believers. We stand justified, but we fail to allow that justification to sink in and become a working part of who we are. It is as if what Jesus did in our atonement was “good enough,” and now we can play out our lives ever walking on the marginal line of mediocrity.

When John says, “In Him there is no sin,” it indicates that Jesus is sinless in the whole state of His eternal existence – past, present, and future. Because He is, we are expected to remove ourselves from the presence of sin to the maximum degree possible based on an ongoing process of sanctification. It is true that we can never become sinless in this life, but it is also true that sin no longer has mastery over us. We should live in the Spirit continuously and make every attempt to flee from sin as we live in the presence of God.

Think it through clearly – Jesus was “manifested” to the world for the very purpose of destroying the devil’s work and allowing us to have victory over what Satan did. Why then would we serve a lesser god – sin – which is no god at all? Instead, let us determine to have victory in Jesus and in the work which is already finished. To the glory of God!

Heavenly Father, forgive us for not pursuing holiness and righteousness to the fullest degree possible. Give us the wisdom and mental attitude that says, “Yes, I will live for

Jesus; I will have victory over the sin in my life.” And by doing so, may You receive all the glory that You are due. Amen!

Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. 1 John 3:6

Three sets of verses, placed side by side, will reveal that John’s words need careful thought –

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” 1 John 1:8-10

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.” 1 John 2:27

“Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” 1 John 3:6

John tells us that believers do sin (first set of verses). He then tells us that believers have an anointing, and that they abide in Christ. He then says that those who abide in Christ do not sin.

Obviously, in order to understand what John is saying, particular care, attention, and thoughtful contemplation are required. This thoughtful process is needed to keep from running into a theological quagmire.

In verse 3:6, John begins with, “Whoever abides in Him does not sin.” Both terms, “abides,” and “does not sin,” are in the present tense. The issue is sin. Paul says that by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). But for those in Christ, they have died to the law (Romans 7:6).

If someone accepts the gospel – “Jesus Christ died for my sin” – he is acknowledging that he is a sinner and that his sin has offended God. One cannot make such a claim if he abides in sin. Therefore, when someone comes to Christ and abides in Him, he “does not sin,” meaning that sin is no longer imputed to him.

The person may commit an offense against God, but the offense is not imputed to him (2 Corinthians 5:19). Because he abides in Christ, and despite his failure to meet God's law, he does not sin. Paul speaks of this in Romans 7:13-25, culminating in the thought, "So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

John next says, "Whoever sins." It is a present participle. It signifies whoever sins and keeps on sinning. A person who has come to Christ is not sinning in the sense that his sins are not being imputed to him. He cannot claim that he does not sin (see 1 John 1:8-10 above), but he is freed from the body of death which is governed by abiding in sin, and he is brought to the body of life which is freedom from the law (by which sin is imputed).

John finishes with the thought that a person who "sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." Both verbs are in the perfect tense. Such a person has never seen (the word signifies not merely sight with the eyes, but discerning who Christ is), nor come to a knowledge of who Christ is. There was never a point in time where this occurred. Because it has not occurred, he sins and keeps on sinning. There has never been a move from the law to grace, from the body of death, to life in Christ, or from a state of the imputation of one's sin to a state where sin is no longer imputed.

Life application: As believers, we sin, but the sin is not imputed to us. Not understanding this, and taking this verse out of its greater context, there is then a misunderstanding of what we are being led to understand. Individuals, congregations, and entire denominations will thus claim that a sinless state is possible in this life.

"Holiness" doctrine refers to this type of belief, and it clearly finds its basis in this verse, even though this verse is not indicating such a doctrine in the first place. Such thinking sets up a contradiction in doctrine when compared with the verses cited above, and with many other verses in the epistles.

Abiding in Christ and habitual sin are mutually exclusive terms and therefore such a relationship cannot exist. Therefore, someone who lives in habitual sin "has neither seen Him nor known Him."

If a person has met the risen Christ and come to the point of salvation, they are free from condemnation. However, we should not ever feel free from the remorse that is caused by sin.

If you are living in open, rebellious sin and don't feel convicted by your actions, you may need to rethink your salvation altogether. Have you ever truly come to Christ? If so, rewards will be lost when you stand before Him. If not, you will hear appropriate words of condemnation on the Day of the Lord's visitation.

Lord God, we cannot deny that we sin, but when we do, we should know it is wrong and that we need to turn to You in remorse, convicted of our actions which are sinful, and which are an offense to You. Give us the desire and ability to overcome our weaknesses and to turn from any actions which are contrary to the salvation Jesus brought about in us when we first called on Him. This we pray to Your glory! Amen.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 1 John 3:7

John now contrasts what he presented in the previous verses. In verse 4, he spoke of committing lawlessness, and that "sin is lawlessness." He then noted that, "whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." At that time, he used a present participle – whoever is sinning (actively and habitually).

With that in mind, he now says, "Little children." Once again, he uses the endearing term *teknia* for "little children." It is as if he is saying, "Take care little ones and listen to my instruction, for it will keep you from harm." And the harm he wishes for them to avoid is explained by his next words, "let no one deceive you."

The word he uses for deceive is *planaó*. It signifies "to cause to wander." Thus, one is led astray. It is the basis for our word "planet." Just as the planets appear to wander in the night sky, so is a person who is led astray. They have no sure footing and are easily led down unhealthy paths of unrighteousness. With that in mind, John continues with, "He who practices righteousness is righteous."

In the Greek, there is an article before "righteousness." It literally says, "He who practices the righteousness." This isn't simply someone who goes out and does a good thing, or good things. Rather, it is a person who is complete in his righteousness. His acts are combined with the heart and attitude behind his conduct.

The verb "practices" is a present participle, and it indicates one who habitually practices. But Paul says, "there is none righteous." As this is so, then it must be speaking of someone who has been converted from that fallen state.

How can one do “the righteousness” and yet be unrighteous? It is not possible unless he is first made righteous. And that can only come from a Source which is righteous. Thus, John’s words speak of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. This was explained in the previous verse to some extent, and it will continue to be explained in the verses ahead. However, it is confirmed (even if not fully explained) in his final words of this verse, which say, “just as He is righteous.”

“He” refers to Christ Jesus. It is a person whose deeds are aligned with his conversion in Christ who is properly demonstrating righteousness. Christ is the standard, and we are to be the emulators. Christ is righteous in and of Himself, and we are endeavoring by continual practice to be molded into His image.

In other words, John is not saying that in Christ we are righteous to the same measure, but that we bear the same state of righteousness. This is why the term “in Christ” is used in the epistles. Believers are clothed in Him and in His righteousness, and that which is done in Him bears His state of righteousness when we conduct our affairs in the manner that we are expected to do.

Life application: John’s words to the “little children” are similar to the words used in the first chapters of Proverbs when the father admonishes his son. Notice the similar language used in Proverbs verses 1 and 9 of Chapter 2 –

“My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,” (Proverbs 2:1)

“Then you will understand righteousness and justice,
Equity *and* every good path.” (Proverbs 2:9)

Also, as noted above, the word John uses for “deceive” means “to lead astray.” Again, in the proverb (just cited) Solomon said that by following sound advice the son would understand “every good path.” John may have been thinking of this particular proverb. Rather than being led astray, one will tread upon the path of righteousness when he is in Christ and follows Him according to His word.

So, what will keep us from wandering? John says here that in practicing righteousness one is righteous. Don’t be deceived by those with an agenda contrary to the biblical model and the Role Model – who is Jesus. We are to live in God’s presence, always pursuing holiness and righteousness.

When we fall short, let us make every effort to acknowledge our shortcomings and ask for forgiveness that we may again be pure. Though we are forgiven already in Christ, acknowledging our failures as we commit them keeps the lines of communication between us and our Creator uncluttered with our misdeeds.

Lord God, how wonderfully glorious to know that because of Your Holy Spirit we have the ability to act righteously and to please You. Now Lord, fill us with the wisdom to follow that path and to bring honor to You through careful attention to our lives, our conduct, our deeds, and our words. To Your beautiful honor we pray. Amen.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

This is the clearest statement to be found concerning the purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ. Many times in Scripture a reason is cited. A few to consider are –

“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.” John 9:39

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” John 10:10

“You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” John 18:37

“This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” 1 Timothy 1:15

“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” 1 John 3:5

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” 1 John 4:9

Each of these shows there is a problem or that there is something lacking which requires correction, but 1 John 3:8 shows the source and cause of these things. The verse also shows us a truth which cannot be denied. One is either in Christ, or he belongs to the

devil. There are no other options available to fallen man. As John says, “He who sins is of the devil.”

The Greek is far more emphatic – “The *one* practicing the sin is of the devil.” The verb is a present participle and it indicates the continuous nature of the state of the person. He has sinned (being born in sin), and he has never come to a point where he has stopped sinning. His life of sin continues on.

Paul has already shown that “all have sinned” in Romans 3:23, and that “the wages of sin *is* death” in Romans 6:2. Paul further states, “just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” As all have sinned because they are in Adam, and as the devil is the source of this occurring, all belong to him. It is man’s default position.

No person has met God’s standard of perfection, and all imperfection will be removed from His presence unless the defect is corrected. Jesus explains this, explicitly, in John 3:18 –

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

John will explain his meaning, but first, after noting that the person “who sins is of the devil,” a thought which extends to all of humanity, he says, “for the devil has sinned from the beginning.” This doesn’t mean he was created as a being that sins, but that there is a point where fault was found in him. With that fault a part of his nature, Satan brought sin about in man, even since the beginning of man’s existence on earth, as is recorded in Genesis 3.

In bringing about the fall of man, man has been stuck – caught under the power of the devil – ever since. And it is, as John states, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.” John clearly, and without ambiguity, states this primary reason for the manifestation of the “Son of God.”

This is the first time that the term “Son of God” is used in this epistle. Up to this point, Jesus has been spoken of as the Son in relation to the Father. Now John speaks of the Son in relation to God to show that, though all men are in Adam, and thus are born under the power of the devil and are “condemned already,” he shows that Jesus Christ

is born of God. As sin travels from father to child, and as all humans have a father, all have sin. However, as Jesus' Father is God, the sin did not transfer.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the picture made in circumcision. God instructed Abraham, and his descendants, to be circumcised in their foreskin in order to make a picture of Christ who would "cut" the sin nature found in man. In Christ, the picture is fulfilled. This all came about so "that He might destroy the works of the devil."

The word "destroy" is the Greek word *luó*. It is the root of our word "loose." Jesus' ministry has loosed the bonds that man was held in by the power of the devil. Isaiah, speaking the word of the Lord to the people of Israel, indicates that this is what their actions and reliance on God were meant to do –

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6

Israel, as a type of Christ to come, was intended to be a light to the nations, but only Jesus – the true Israel and the true Light – was capable of making this desire a reality.

Man disobeyed God and the authority over man transferred to the devil. Jesus Christ, not being under that authority, fully obeyed God and remains in a perfect relationship with God. As He fulfilled the Law of Moses, the standard which God set for the people of the world, He thus embodies that law. Contained within that law is the provision for substitutionary atonement.

A man would transfer his sin to an innocent animal, and the animal would die in place of the man. At that time, God would forgive the offender and a propitious relationship would come about. As this is a part of the law, and as Christ embodies the law, Christ's death can be a substitutionary atonement for any who come to Him.

This is how the power of the devil is destroyed. Man moves from Adam to Christ, and the power of the devil is destroyed in that man. He is brought into the family of God. However, this doesn't explain how man can stay in that relationship. If he sins again, would he not fall again under the power of the devil? The answer is, "No."

The New Covenant in Christ's blood has no provision for the imputation of sin, only for rewards and loss of rewards. A person is "in Christ," and he is covered by His righteousness. As Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 –

"Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ 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."

God is no longer imputing sin to man. The rule of Christ never ceases in man because of this. This is why John states his first clause with a present participle –

"The *one* practicing the sin is of the devil" (literal translation). Later, the man came to Christ, acknowledged he is a sinner ("Christ died for our sins" 1 Corinthians 15:3), and he is granted forgiveness. He is sealed with God's guarantee of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14), and he is no longer imputed sin (2 Corinthians 5:19). The power of the devil is destroyed in the man, death no longer reigns, eternal life is granted, and reconciliation with God is realized forevermore.

Life application: In Christ, the yokes are broken, and the heavy burdens are removed. The devil's power is destroyed, and man has a new, glorious, and eternal hope. Thank God for Jesus Christ!

Thank You, O God, for Jesus! Thank You that He loosed the works of the devil which had us bound with heavy chains. Now, in Christ we are free to live in Your presence, and we have the assurance of eternal life ahead of us. May we never forget the great and awesome work He accomplished so that we might be reconciled to you! Amen.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:9

In the previous verse, John wrote concerning Christ's manifestation and that it was "to destroy the works of the devil." This is what Christ did. The devil uses the power of the law against man. It is not that there is anything wrong with the law, but it is man's inability to keep it which keeps him in a state of bondage. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and when one is under law, sin is imputed. However, Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law for those who come to Him.

In coming to Christ, John says, "Whoever is born of God." It is a perfect participle, "having been born." The act is complete, and the new nature is assumed. Just as when a

person is born into humanity, he remains a human, when one is born of God, he remains a child of God. The nature is changed, the action is complete, and it is ongoing from that point on.

For such a person, John says he “does not sin.” The word signifies to do, produce, make, or cause (etc.). It is used when a tree bears, or brings forth, fruit of one kind or another. The one who is born of God does not bring forth sin. John then says that the reason for this is because “His seed remains in him.”

It is the seed of God which remains in the believer. Jesus alluded to such a change in Matthew 7 when He said –

“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.”
Matthew 7:17, 18

Vincent’s Word Studies calls the seed, “the divine principle of life.” It is a correct analysis. Man begets human children, cows beget cows, mango seeds produce mangoes. It is theology 101 from page 1 of the Bible. All things reproduce after their own kind. When a person comes to Christ, a child of God is produced in that act. And just as God does not sin, so the one born of God does not sin because the change has taken place. The seed which brought forth the new life remains in that person. With this change, John then says, “and he cannot sin.” This is reflected in 1 John 3:6, where John wrote, “Whoever abides in Him does not sin.” That is strengthened here with “he cannot sin.” Of this, Vincent’s Word Studies says this is, “Conceived as a perfect ideal.” That misrepresents the matter. It is not merely an ideal, but it is an absolute truth. But Vincent’s then rightly explains the thought by saying, “life in God excludes the possibility of sin.” It is more than an ideal, but an objective fact. This is then explained by the final words of the verse, which say, “because he has been born of God.”

As already noted, all things reproduce after their own kind. Being born of God moves a person from Adam to Christ. The believer is in Christ, and the change is complete. But how can this be? The answer takes one back to Abraham. He was declared righteous in Genesis 15. Many years later, he was given the sign of that righteousness – circumcision. A sign anticipates and speaks of something else. It is not a thing in and of itself.

In other words, one cannot point at a circumcised man and say, “He is righteous.” That is evident by Paul’s words of Romans 2:25. The sign anticipated and pictured the coming of Christ. The male sexual organ was cut in order to provide a picture of what Christ

would do. The seed of man is transmitted through this organ. It is through the sexual act that sin is transferred from father to child when the child is conceived. As all humans have human fathers, then all are conceived in sin (see Psalm 51:5).

However, Christ was born of a woman, but His Father is God. Thus, he is fully human, but He is also fully God. As God is the Father, and as God has no sin, there was no transfer of sin to Christ Jesus. The picture of circumcision – the cutting of man’s sin nature – is complete. He is the sinless, perfect, Son of God. He was born under the law, He did not sin under the law, and He died in fulfillment of the law. Therefore, when one comes to Christ, he dies to the law. As he is no longer bound by law, he cannot sin. Even if he does wrong, no sin is imputed to him (2 Corinthians 5:19). This is what John is saying. Sin is still possible (see John 1:8). However, without the imputation of that sin, then as Vincent’s rightly noted, “life in God excludes the possibility of sin.” It may be more precise to say, “life in Christ.” It is in Christ – the God/Man – that this is realized. His human nature bears as much weight in the redemptive process as does His divine nature.

This is the marvel and wonder of what God has done in and through the giving of His Son for fallen man. It is a glorious state in which we exist, and it is a state which should be treated in practice in the same manner as the person stands in position – to the glory of God.

Life application: Notice the pattern of John’s writing – he makes basically the same statement in both a favorable and an unfavorable light. “Whoever is...does not sin” and “he cannot...because he has been.” This particular statement is adamant about the expected life of holiness that the believer is to live in, and it therefore intimates the obvious state of those who don’t live as mentioned.

What he says here may seem contradictory to what he said in other verses, such as 1 John 1:8 which says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” However, such a contradiction is only apparent in our English translation. First, the tense used in the verses is different. The example from 1:8 tells us that we can’t claim to be sinless because we all fall and sin from time to time (even if sin is not imputed). The verse here tells us that we “cannot sin and be born of God.” It speaks of our nature and position in Christ regardless of our human actions.

As we were told in verse 2 of this chapter, because of Jesus Christ we are now children of God. When a child is born, he naturally takes on the characteristics of his father. This is the genetic pattern of life. As we are sons of Adam through the physical world, we

bear the image of Adam in the physical world. Likewise, we bear his image in the transmission of sin.

However, when we come to Jesus Christ, our spiritual nature takes on the nature of God. If the marks of the physical world are so obvious that we resemble Adam hundreds of generations and thousands of years after his life, how much more will our spiritual nature resemble that of God when we move from spiritual death to spiritual life through the regeneration by the Spirit?

Should we fall away and walk in a pattern of habitual sin, the circumstances will be the same as if we fail to drink water when we thirst; we will die because of our actions. One cannot live in sin without reaping the consequences of that sin. Physical death is sure to ensue and our rewards from God will be excluded. Only our spirit will be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:5). But the imputation of sin no longer occurs because our nature is that of man in Christ and under grace, not law.

Thank God for Jesus Christ who has brought us to this state. Let us live out our lives in a manner which reflects our true and holy nature before God, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Lord God, as the psalmist said, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." And so, Lord, we ask that you look over us and keep us from the habitual sins which can only bring about sadness before You. Instead, strengthen us to live now in Your temple as living stones, holy and acceptable to You. May our walk in this life reflect the position we already hold because of the change brought about in us through Christ. Amen.

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:10

The words, "In this," are debated as to the reference. Is it what he just said concerning being born of God, or is it referring to what he will next say concerning practicing righteousness? The NKJV places a colon at the end of this first clause, indicating the latter view, but it isn't really certain. In verse 3:8, the reason for the manifestation of Christ was stated afterwards. If John is consistent in that pattern, then the second clause explains the first. This seems logical and likely.

John has said that one who has been born of God does not sin. Now, he will show a way of telling who such a person is. To do so, he says, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest.” This is the only time that the term “children of the devil” is used in Scripture. There are verses which imply someone is a child of the devil, or that use a similar term, such as Acts 13:10, John 8:44, and Ephesians 2:3. Also, 1 John 3:8 likewise made the distinction clear.

However, John’s use of the two opposing terms in this one verse shows that these are the only two positions for humanity. One is either a child of the devil, or he is a child of God. No other intermediate position exists. To help identify a person’s position in this regard, John continues with, “Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God.”

It is a present participle. Thus, it literally reads, “Each one who is not practicing righteousness.” This is a further explanation of what was stated in verse 3:7 when John said, “He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” The two thoughts complement and support one another. The person who is truly a believer in Christ does righteousness, and the one who is not truly a believer does not do righteousness. The position defines the nature of the doing.

John finishes the verse with, “nor *is* he who does not love his brother.” This statement begins a thought on love which will continue in the verses ahead. John brings in love as an evidence of a person who is a child of God, or of the person who remains a child of the devil. In this, love is again a present participle (is loving). It is a volitional act of the will. The actions are intended to demonstrate the position in relation to God.

Life application: Paul speaks of the position of humanity belonging to either God or to the devil in his writings. One example is in Ephesians 2:3 –

“...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

We are children of wrath by nature. Only when we come to Jesus Christ is our nature changed. It is this moment that we are “born again” as Jesus states in John 3:3. This is also a logical conclusion based on God’s curse of Adam in Genesis 3.

God told Adam in Genesis 2 that he would die on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. In Genesis 3, Adam is cursed and removed from Eden and from fellowship with God.

Adam died spiritually that day and that spiritual death remains in all humans, through him, until we move to Christ.

To “practice righteousness” is to accept the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and thus it enables victory over sin in our lives. Until we do this, we cannot attain the state necessary to be righteous because our very nature excludes what is necessary – spiritual life. The two go hand in hand and are inseparable. Either we are in Jesus and able to practice righteousness, or we are in Adam and unable to do so.

“Practicing righteousness” then is more than doing good works. It is the complete state of the person based on his position in Jesus Christ. Attempts at good works apart from Christ actually further remove us from Him, because they become trust in self, not in God – an amazing paradox.

Lord, we can only thank You for the gift of righteousness that came through Jesus our Lord. Without His work on our behalf, we would have remained dead in sin and lost...children of Your wrath. By Your infinite grace and mercy though, we are saved, saved, saved by the precious blood of Jesus. Hallelujah and amen!

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 1 John 3:11

The previous verse relayed that the one who does not love his brother is not of God. To demonstrate that this is something expected of those who are in Christ, John now says, “For this is the message that you heard.” The word translated as “message” was first used in 1 John 1:5. This is now its second and last use. It signifies an announcement. By implication, it is then a precept.

John says this message is one “that you heard from the beginning.” This thought goes back to Chapter 2. There he wrote –

“Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.” 1 John 2:7

There, he used the word “commandment.” Here John calls it a “message.” John is showing that this “commandment” is not one which falls under the category of the law. Rather, it is a precept which is expected of believers, but the failure of which (something that all must admit to from time to time) does not end in the imputation of sin.

The words, “from the beginning,” speak of from the beginning of the New Covenant. Christ Jesus had set forth this commandment, and it then extended forth to all who heard the word.

John then says the message is, “that we should love one another.” This is taken from John’s gospel, where he noted the words of Jesus –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

John is repeating that word from the Lord to ensure it would continue to be remembered by those who do believe, and to be passed on to those who will believe. So ingrained in John was this precept, that the Pulpit Commentary notes –

“Jerome, in his ‘Commentary on Galatians’ (Galatians 6:10), tells us that when St. John became too infirm to preach, he used often to say no more than this, ‘Little children, love one another.’ His hearers at last wearied of it, and said, ‘Master, why dost thou always say this?’ ‘It is the Lord’s command,” he replied; “and if this alone is done, it is enough.’”

Life application: Think about the times in which the recipients of this letter were given this word. Their lives were lived under the weight of the Roman Empire. The emperors were heralded as living gods. Vows of allegiance to them were often required, and the complete authority of the empire rested in their hands.

At times, people living under these rulers were expected to verbally acknowledge the deity of the emperor or forfeit their own lives. This very well may have been what John was thinking about as he wrote this. The Christians were desperately in need of sticking together, despite petty differences. As it says in Ecclesiastes –

“Two *are* better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,
For *he has* no one to help him up.
Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;
But how can one be warm *alone*?

Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

There is strength in numbers. More importantly, the bond of love is that which securely holds those numbers together; cementing them into one strong and impenetrable union. This is truly the message we have heard from the beginning, because love is the very state which would have kept us from all of the grief of ages past, which sustains us in the present, and is the perfect state we can anticipate for the eternal ages which are yet future. Listen well to the advice – We should love one another.

Most glorious Heavenly Father, give us the ability to love others, even as You have loved us. We can look to the mystery of the Trinity and see infinite and perfect love. We can look to the cross and see unimaginable love. We can look to the eyes of our Savior and see eternal love. May we reflect these examples in our love for those around us, and especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ! Amen.

...not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous. 1 John 3:12

Greek scholars and commentators almost universally note the strange grammatical construction of John’s words. There is no “who” in the original, and there is no pronoun before “the wicked one.” It is said to be irregular and almost ungrammatical. However, John is making the definite article into a demonstrative pronoun. Young’s Literal Translation says, “not as Cain – of the evil one he was.”

Stating the position of Cain in this way has, unfortunately, led many Christians into very sloppy theology. They claim that Satan actually had sex with Eve and Cain is the offspring of this union. An entire theology is built up from this type of thinking which leads into a very poor hermeneutic in much of the rest of the Bible. The point John is making is that Cain, instead of following the truth of God, followed the way of the devil.

Adam and his wife were deceived by the devil and fell. However, Adam later believed the truth of God’s word concerning the coming Messiah by faith, and the Lord clothed him and his wife – a picture of salvation. But as a lesson for all people who come from Adam, the story of Cain and Abel is immediately introduced. One son continued in faith and presented an acceptable offering to God. The other, despite offering to God, did not do so in faith. The Lord accepted Abel’s offering, but He rejected Cain’s.

This lesson was given to show exactly what John had just referred to in verses 3:7-11. One is either in Christ and his works are acceptable, or he remains of the devil and his works are not acceptable. This has nothing to do with Cain being born of a union between the devil and Eve. Rather it is a truth that affects all people on earth who descend from Adam. Cain was “of the wicked one” and his heart and actions reflected his position in the devil.

He failed to live in faith, “and murdered his brother.” The account is recorded in Genesis 4 –

“Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” Genesis 4:2-5

Many commentaries are put forth attempting to explain why the Lord accepted Abel’s offering and why He rejected Cain’s, but they are unnecessary. The Bible explains why –

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Hebrews 4:4

Abel’s offering was one of faith. It is the consistent message of Scripture. One cannot work his way into pleasing God. Only by faith in God’s word and in His promises can one be pleasing to Him.

John next demonstrates this by using the concept of works. He asks, “And why did he murder him?” The word translated as “murder” is only found in the writings of John. It is used twice in this verse, and eight times in Revelation. It signifies to butcher, particularly an animal for food or as a sacrifice.

Cain treated his brother as an animal for sacrifice, maybe thinking that he could make up for his own failed offering by offering a man – his own brother – instead of the fruit of the ground. But he did so out of jealousy concerning his brother’s offering. In this, he only sinned more. As John says, “Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”

What works? It was the offerings presented to the Lord. But the works themselves show why they were or were not accepted. It is because of the faith that either accompanied them, or that was lacking in them. Abel’s works were based on his faith and extended

from that faith. Cain's works were not works of faith, and thus they were works of pride, of self, and of earning God's favor through personal merit. The Lord rejects such works because they are of the devil.

This is the same lesson that James conveys in James 2. James is not speaking of works being a natural result of saving faith, and thus an evidence of it. Rather, he is speaking of works (if they exist) being works of faith. Only deeds of faith are acceptable to God.

Life application: Cain is the first human ever recorded as being born, and he was a murderer. The Bible records that he "was of the wicked one," meaning the devil. Jesus said elsewhere –

"You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it." John 8:44

The devil "was a murderer from the beginning." Jesus was indicating that it is through the work of the devil that death came into the human experience. This doesn't mean only physical death – a result of the removal of the tree of life. It also, and more specifically, means spiritual death.

This spiritual death occurred when Satan enticed Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Just as Satan is a murderer, so Cain, who followed the path of the devil, became one. John says Cain killed his brother "because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."

We must remember that the offering of Abel was one of faith. The type of offering made no difference – both types of offerings are later required under the Levitical law. Instead, what matters to God is that the offering then, and our offerings now, must be of faith.

Lord, we pray that you will accept our offerings based on the faith we place behind them. Though we may not be rich by the world's standards, we know that You will accept whatever amount we give when it is done with the proper attitude and in recognition of who You are, what You have already done on our behalf, and of what You have promised for us into the future. May it be so, to Your glory alone. Amen.

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 1 John 3:13

John just referred to Cain who murdered his brother. He then explained that he did so because “his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.” John, understanding that those in Christ are now imputed His righteousness, shows that what Cain felt toward Abel – meaning the enmity and hatred – is something to be expected by believers. In this, he says, “Do not marvel.”

The word signifies to be amazed or astonished. John is implying that those he is writing to may be incredulous at the enmity they were experiencing. He next says, “my brethren.” This is the only time he uses this particular word in the epistle. His usual address has been “little children,” or “beloved.” However, he certainly uses the term “brethren” here to contrast his brothers, whom he loves, to Cain who hated his brother.

One may have a brother by blood and hate him, but within the context of those in Christ, they are brothers who are to be loved – unconditionally. One may not especially like another believer, but those differences should in no way negate his loving him in a volitional manner.

John finishes the thought with, “if the world hates you.” Here, the word “hate” is in the present tense and in the indicative mood. There was hatred, and that hatred was a fact that was directed towards the believers. One might paraphrase his words, “if the world hates you as it does.” If Cain hated Abel for his right conduct in his offering to the Lord, how much more would one expect the world to hate believers who are “in Christ” and thus not of this world! As it is so, no believer should be surprised at the matter.

Life application: The believers John addressed had obviously been caught unaware by persecution from the nonbelievers around them. Nothing has changed since that time. The sons of disobedience who are under the devil’s power have been, and will continue, persecuting the sons of God. When John says “if” the world hates you, he is using the word as a foregone conclusion. It is a fact and not a mere possibility. The reason faithful believers are hated is because their lives are a testimony to the fact that the unsaved are... well, unsaved.

The problem with people is that they don’t want to admit that it’s possible that God has chosen one path, and one path alone, for men to be saved. Rather, man desires to follow the desires of his heart, knowing inside that this path condemns him. But the prospect of condemnation is something no one looks forward to. And so, a conflict rises which demands a choice –

- 1) Give up on self and trust in Jesus (with all that should entail, such as giving up on one's favorite vice or perversion), or
- 2) 2) Mentally blocking out the truth of the gospel and directing anger at the God who is intolerant of their behavior.

In the case of the second option, the anger at God is directed at the people of God. If you don't believe this, simply go to the internet and type "Christian Persecution" into your image search engine. The horrors perpetrated against faithful believers around the world are astonishing – all because of the name of the One who can bring about reconciliation with God.

When a believer understands the depravity of the unregenerate human heart, he should in no way marvel when persecution comes. Be faithful to the Lord regardless of what you may face in the future. He has promised a far better eternal existence for those who love Him.

Thank You, O God, for Jesus! May we be willing to endure whatever it takes to remain faithful and obedient sons – bringing glory to You through His name! Regardless of what the world can do to us, we cherish above all else the title of "Christian" because it reflects our personal relationship with Jesus. And that makes being a child of Yours possible. Amen.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. 1 John 3:14

In verse 10, John mentioned love for one's brother. He then provided the example of Cain, and he gave an explanation between practicing righteousness or not doing so. He now returns to the love of the brethren here, beginning with, "We know."

The words are highly emphatic, and they are contrasted to those of the world mentioned in the previous verse. To know indicates all certainty; it is an assured fact. The believer knows he has done something and is positive in his mind about it. There is no doubt, and there is no reason to relay to others that the situation is otherwise. And that thing which a true and grounded believer knows is "that we have passed from death to life."

The word translated as "have passed" signifies "to pass over." It is from one state to another. There is a departure from one's position, and thus there is a movement to that of another position. Further, there is an article before both "death" and "life" – "we

have passed out of the death to the life” (YLT). This truth is especially stated by Jesus in John 5:24, where He also used the article –

“Verily, verily, I say to you — He who is hearing my word, and is believing Him who sent me, hath life age-during, and to judgment he doth not come, but hath passed out of the death to the life.” YLT

Jesus uses the same article in Revelation 1:8. John’s words, then, are a rather basic statement, and it can only mean one thing. There is nothing hidden in them, and there is nothing to indicate that the “knowing” of the person is somehow wrong. Believers can know that they have passed from the death to the life. Further, John’s words are in the perfect tense, indicative mood. In other words, it is a done deal; the action is complete, and we have become united with Christ in the move. Further, there is certainty in the matter; it is an objective fact.

We have moved from darkness to light; from death to life; from the devil to God. These are not made up concepts, but each of them has been used by John to show us our new position because of our faith in Jesus. Taking these words, and uniting them with Jesus’ words in John 5, it is incredible to see believers state that a person can lose his salvation.

What does Jesus say? “...and to judgment he doth not come.” Everlasting life is granted, sin is no longer imputed, and the fear of judgment (unto condemnation) is past. The only judgment believers will receive is for rewards and losses, but not in a positional move back to “the death.”

Understanding this fundamental point of theology, John continues with, “because we love the brethren.” Jesus explained this in John 13 –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

The point John is making is based on the words of the previous verse – “the world hates you.” The person who did not believe in Jesus a moment earlier, hated what Jesus stands for. In his hating of the faith, he then hated those of the faith. It is the faith that defines who a believer is, and what he is. When the person realizes his need for Christ, he can no longer hate those who represent what Jesus stands for. One has moved from hatred to love and from the death to the life.

John then finishes the thought with, “He who does not love *his* brother abides in death.” Sin results in death (the wages of sin is death). A person who is in that state is of the world, and the world hates Jesus. In hating Jesus, hatred of the brotherhood who represent Jesus is an obvious consequence.

John is not speaking of the individual love between two people. A non-believer can be married to, and love, a believer (1 Corinthians 7 shows that such unions exist). However, the nonbeliever has an internal hatred toward the message of Christ (he does not believe). In this state, he abides in death. In abiding in death, there is a hatred for what the believer (even a person he loves) stands for.

The thought is of one where a person stands in relation to Christ. It is not speaking of the emotional love between two people, but of the love of God in Christ. Regardless as to the love between the two, the state of hatred toward the identity with Christ remains.

Life application: In John’s words there is no other option than to state that this love equates to life, and hate then equates with death.

The test for us then in considering the truth of our being born again is *not* that the world hates us. The test is whether we love the brethren. Anytime someone claims exclusivity on the road to salvation, the world will hate them. This is simply because no one wants to be left out of God’s paradise. Therefore, when anyone claims his way is the only way, he is – because of this precept – going to be hated. This is no guarantee of following the truth though.

Cults do this all the time, and yet they are as far from God as any pagan. It is the born-again believer who trusts Christ with his salvation, and who has thereby come to love his fellow believers, that has moved to the sphere of light and life. Despite the failings of others, as well as their idiosyncrasies, make every effort to love the brethren and be at peace with those who may be annoying. It is what God calls us to do as His saved children.

Lord, help us to feel the conviction of not loving other believers as we should. Soften our hearts and make them tender towards our fellow believers. Rather than demanding that they change, may it be each of us who are willing to do the changing. Give us the ability to be the ones to reconcile all the petty and insignificant differences we have. This we pray for Your glory. Amen.

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 1 John 3:15

John now sets forth another proposition to be considered, beginning with, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.” This is similar in thought to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5–

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” Matthew 5:21, 22

Society evaluates man based on his actions. If he has an inclination in his heart to kill another person, he is not guilty of killing that person. However, God is evaluating the heart and intent of the person. The hatred of a brother is as if he has committed the act. In his words, John uses a term which signifies a manslayer. It covers both intentional and unintentional killing, and it is only elsewhere found in John 8:44 –

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

John is tying the person who hates his brother in with the devil, showing that they bear the same nature. Because they do – both are murderers – he then says, “and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

Of this, the Geneva Bible rightly says, “A confirmation: Whoever is a murderer, is in eternal death: he who hates his brother is a murderer, therefore he is in death. Thereupon follows the other side: He that loves his brother has passed to life, for indeed we are born dead.”

Further, and again rightly stated, Cambridge says, “Here, as elsewhere, S. John speaks of eternal life as something which the Christian already has, not which he hopes to win: comp. ... Eternal life has nothing to do with time, and is neither lost nor gained by physical death.”

An obvious reason for such conclusions is that a person is positionally “in Christ” the moment he receives Christ. Sin is no longer imputed to him for actions which violate law (2 Corinthians 5:19). However, it is certainly true that Christians have – throughout the

church age and to this day – murdered (intentionally or unintentionally) others. And yet, they remain saved and they possess eternal life.

Therefore, what John is speaking of is either one being like Cain and of the devil (see John 8:44 above), or they have moved to Christ and are of Christ. There is only one of two states for all humanity. We can either choose Christ, and therefore love the people who are in Christ (and what they are doing to bring people to Christ), or we will remain in the devil and hate those who are in Christ (and reject what they are doing to bring people to Christ).

What is being done in Christ and for Christ cannot be separated from who He is. This is evident from the entire surrounding body of what is said in John 8 –

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” John 8:42-47

Life application: Jesus uses the same type of analogy concerning adultery – the intent of the heart is what is judged by God. Even the Ten Commandments search the hearts for intent – such as coveting. When we have such heart problems, they are evaluated as such.

Thank God for His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus who no longer imputes to us sin for the thoughts which we continue to bear in our hearts.

O God, You know that our hearts tread in unsafe waters from time to time. You know the deepest secrets they hold and the depths of wickedness that we are capable of. So, Lord, please keep us from allowing these thoughts and intents to grow. We know if they do, we could easily act upon them, bringing great shame to Your name in other’s eyes. Guide us from such paths of waywardness and lead us on paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake. Amen.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. 1 John 3:16

John now brings in a thought that ties in nicely with verse 3:1. Putting them side by side, this can be seen –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.”

In his words of this verse, John includes an article before “love” to show us this. The Greek more precisely reads, “By this, we know the love.” In this, it is the state of love which is referred to. John says that we can know this perfect state of love “because He laid down His life for us.” As an important side note, the KJV erringly inserts the words “of God” after “the love” into this verse –

“Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us.”

This insertion is inappropriate. God did not die. The human side of Jesus – the Man – died. This may be the same as “the love of God” found in the next verse, but only in the fact that God directed it, not because God “laid down His life.” The insertion produces a theological error and needs to be annotated as such in that version in order to avoid confusion.

It is Christ Jesus’ humanity that died, thus demonstrating the perfect love that should direct our own lives. This is then explained by John when he says, “And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.” Jesus set the example, showing us that physical death is not the end of our existence, and thus it is not something that we should shy away from when it can mean the saving of others.

Because Christ rose from the grave, and because He promises to those who believe in Him that they too will rise from the grave, there is – literally – nothing to be concerned about in giving up one’s life for another. And because this is a demonstration of “the love,” meaning the perfect love, then it is a demonstration of being a faithful follower of Christ who embodies the love of God in Himself. This is why John refers to “the love of God” in the coming verse. It is not because God gave up His life, but because Christ Jesus, in His humanity did so, thus revealing the very heart of what God intends for us to see concerning Him.

Life application: John's words, "we know," are in the perfect tense. In other words, he is speaking of a completed action. It is obvious what he is referring to – the cross. By this example, above all other examples, we know love. Along with this comes the explicit comment – "He laid down His life for us." John is confirming here what he recorded in his gospel, meaning the very words of Jesus-

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." John 10:17, 18

Later, in John 15, Jesus tells us this is the greatest of all love – that a man would lay down his life for his brother. Thinking on Jesus' words and processing it in light of the crucifixion, which he personally witnessed many years earlier, John stood in complete awe of the God/Man who would demonstrate such amazing love. John's words, in all of his writings, simply exude the love of God. For this reason, he is also particularly hard on false teachings.

Such teachings attempt to undermine the heart of what his eyes had witnessed and what his mind had thought about – complete, pure, and perfect love. And now, in his old age, John repeats to us what the Lord did and asks us to act in the same manner. He tells us that we ought also "to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Our dying isn't an act of removing their sins as Jesus' was. Instead, it reveals a demonstration that we know our sins were removed and that we wish to fellowship with Jesus in His death if it means life for another. Simply amazing! Simply astonishing! What a path to peace!

Lord Jesus, if it will bring You glory and if we are in the right time and place to be given the honor of laying down our lives for another, may we do so without reticence or timidity. Instead, may we do so with the intent of saving that person so that he can live another day. If our lives end for such a reason, then we will consider it an honor and a reward in itself. Amen.

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 1 John 3:17

In the previous verse, John spoke of us laying down our lives for one another as the greatest example of love and something we should be willing to do for one another.

Today, John brings another type of person into stark contrast with a person who would lay down his life in this way – the person who won't simply help a brother in need.

In other words, dying for one another is the high and lofty goal we should set, but simply helping those around us who are truly in need is an outward demonstration of the basic sort of faith that anyone can and should possess.

And so, John begins with, "But whoever has this world's goods." The Greek literally reads, "the goods of the world." This term speaks of someone who has the personal necessities of life to sustain him. It is implied that what he has is enough to share with others, because John next says, "and sees his brother in need."

The person obviously is fine in and of himself to the point where he can extend his hand to the brother who is in need. The words, "sees his brother," indicate an obvious observation of the person and the dire straits he is in. He sees him and continues to see him in this situation, and yet he "shuts up his heart from him."

The one who has the world's goods allows his heart to harden to that person's unhappy situation. This indicates an intentional and perverse attitude concerning his fellow man – his brother – who is in need. Such a person fails to meet the basic description of a person who is right with God. This is seen as John finishes with the question, "how does the love of God abide in him?"

The stated question then is not only rhetorical, but it demands a harsh answer –

Q: "How does the love of God abide in him?"

A: "It doesn't. This man fails the basic test of demonstrating he is a child of the living God."

John's words here closely follow in thought to those of James –

"What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

James 2:14-17

Life application: The idea presented here is one which was spoken of by Jesus. It continues through Paul's writings, and it is carried on by these other apostles as well. If we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for others, how much more willing should we be to extend our help to those that we should even lay down our lives for!

Search yourself carefully and see if you pass this basic and precisely worded test. If you do, then don't forget that there truly are those in need who can use love, assistance, and prayer. Remember to tend to them and be the type of child that God has called you to be. Do this to His glory and honor and to the praise of Jesus – the ultimate example of the love of God.

Yes, O God! We will do our best at helping those around us who are truly in need. Let our hearts not be callous and cold to such people as we live our lives in the abundance You have given to us. May we be willing to share what is rightfully Yours in the first place. And this we pray to Your glory and the glory of our Savior Jesus. Amen.

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:18

John has been speaking of accomplishing deeds for others – laying down one's life, sharing the world's goods, etc. He now shares a simple instruction which goes to the heart of this type of attitude. To do so, he begins with his familiar address, "My little children." Again, John is speaking to those who believe, as a father would speak to his young ones. This is to impress upon his reader that this is an obvious thing, but it is one which still must be taught. It is so obvious that one might trip right over it by neglecting the more important part of the matter, which begins with, "let us not love in word or in tongue."

The Greek has no article before "word," but there is one before "tongue." A more precise reading would be, "let us not love in word, neither with the tongue."

He is not saying to not do these things, but not to only do these things. To love in word is acceptable, and we do it all the time. But it is no good to love in word, even if we mean it, and to not act upon that love when it is necessary to do so. This would demonstrate a love which is unwilling to move to action because it is weak: either in the source, or toward the object of the love. In other words, the act of laying one's life down for another may be greater than the source can muster, or the act of giving of one's worldly goods towards another may be evaluated as too great in relation to the object of the love.

To love in tongue is to “say” there is a love, but which is hypocritical from the outset. The source of the statement bears no love for the object in the first place.

Such a feckless love is wrong. John says we are not to merely have genuine love, but we are to act upon what issues forth from the mouth by loving “in deed and in truth.” The “deed” is the laying down of one’s life. The “deed” is giving, even when what is possessed appears to be of a greater value to the person than the object of the action. It is a sacrificial giving which may actually hurt, but which is right to do. The “truth” is that if the word of love is spoken, it is to be an honest word; one without hypocrisy. If it is not an honest word, it is not to be conveyed in the first place.

Life application: In the previous verse, the words of James were cited. Again here, they are appropriate to be cited again –

“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?” James 2:15, 16

In both instances, the tongue is used to “love” the brother, but nothing is done to demonstrate the love indicated. In John’s verse, he says we should not merely “love in word or tongue.” James indicates that such an attitude is completely unprofitable.

It is as if these two men were singing the same song, and echoing one another, as their voices rise above the false living around them. Further, deeds need to be backed up by real love or they are without any true value – “You look hungry, can I get you anything to eat? And is there anything else I can do to help? I’m sorry for your troubles and I’d like to pray with you if you’d like.” As Solomon noted long ago –

“Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor
Will also cry himself and not be heard.” Proverbs 21:13

Let us then love in deed and also in truth. May our tongues not just wag at the plight of those around us. This can be applied to both the physically and the spiritually needy. Have you taken the time to tell the poor in spirit about Jesus? Eternity is waiting for them too. Where they will spend it may be up to you opening your mouth and speaking.

Lord Jesus, in relation to the time we have been given, what little time we have actually devoted to the needy around us – both those who are physically needy and those who are spiritually needy as they live without a saving knowledge of You. Turn our hearts to

be those whose hearts break for the poor in body and in spirit. And, Lord, direct our steps to tend to their needs. Amen.

And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. 1 John 3:19

John just wrote of loving not merely “in word or tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Now, speaking of such true love, he says, “And by this we know that we are of the truth.” He is referring to that which he just wrote, not something he will next write about. We know that we are of the truth if we love as we ought to love.

In the end, the state of our hearts is really only known by us and by God, and we even have the ability to deceive ourselves. Therefore, John is essentially asking us to do a full self-evaluation of our words and actions, searching to see if “we are of the truth.” In this, we “shall assure our hearts before Him.”

Here, the words “before him” are emphatic. The order of the Greek is, “and before Him we will assure the heart of us.” In evaluating our actions, and especially the intent behind them, we will be able to assure our own hearts that we are truly conducting ourselves in the manner which reveals the truth of our state.

In doing this, we then make it possible to then have an appropriate response to our self-evaluation – either a condemning heart, or a heart which has confidence toward God. That is what John will continue to speak of in the verses ahead. But such is not possible without truly searching ourselves out – in both deed, and in the motive behind our deeds.

Life application: John has been talking about love for our brethren for quite a few verses. He indicates that this is the test of being a true believer. When we have the ability to love our brethren as we are supposed to, then we have the full assurance that “we are of the truth.” It is possessing a knowledge which assures our hearts before God.

The word “assure,” which John uses here, carries the thought of persuading or even tranquilizing our hearts. We can have completely pacified hearts when we come into God’s presence. Obviously, the opposite should be true if our motives are not genuine. We should feel convicted and uneasy about our prayers and our expectation of meeting God when we fail to love our brothers in Christ as we should. It really is a double-edged sword. We can overcome the guilt though, by simply acting in a manner which unities us in Christ.

In the book of Hebrews, we read these words –

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

Jesus endured the same emotions and feelings that we did. Because of this, He can sympathize with us in our own weakness. If you are struggling with the love-of-the-brother issue, then go boldly to the throne of grace and ask God to help you with it. Tell Him you need a spiritual tune up and a change in heart about the brother you are at odds with. When you do this, your heart will be assured before Him – tranquilized and at complete rest in His peaceful presence.

Thank You Lord, that we can come boldly into your presence to find help in our times of need. At times, we struggle with loving some fellow Christians, and we know the wall it sets between us and You, but when we come to You for the purpose of settling these differences, the door is open, and You are there to help us. Thank You for this, Lord God. Amen.

For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

1 John 3:20

This is admitted to be a difficult verse by Greek scholars. Vincent’s Word Studies argues that the opening conjunction should be translated as a relative – “In whatever.” If so, it would say as the NASB – “In whatever our hearts condemn us.”

No matter what the translation, the verse does not stand alone. It must be taken with the surrounding context. John had just noted (verse 18) that we are not to love in word or tongue, but in deed and truth. That was based on how we treat others (verses 16 & 17). He then said (verse 19) that we know we are of the truth, “and shall assure our hearts before Him.” He is tying in our treatment of others to the state of our hearts.

There may be things which condemn our hearts, such as our treatment of others, a hidden sin we cannot shake off, a sudden burst of anger at someone or because of something, and so on. In such a display, our hearts may say, “How can you be saved?”, or “How can God love you?”, or maybe, “You are a miserable excuse for a Christian.”

This is natural thinking, and it is correct. If it were up to our actions, we would lose our salvation. If God was any other than God, He would truly not like us. And if being a Christian meant that we must be perfect in and of ourselves, we certainly would not be Christians. But each of these is an evaluation of the situation based on our own limited perceptions and abilities. God is infinite and has control of the entire universe. He is not stuck on our teeny little part of either time or space. As John says, "God is greater than our heart."

Our hearts are, as Jeremiah says, "deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked." He then asks, "Who can know it." The answer is, "No human can know even his own heart." But God can, because He "knows all things." He is not limited to time. Therefore, when a person comes to Christ, that person is given a new direction, a spiritual rebirth, and he is no longer imputed sin for the things he does (such as those mentioned above).

God does not forget the sealing of His Spirit upon the person. He does not forget the guarantee which that signifies, and He understands the limitations and failings that accompany our fallen bodies in a fallen world. If it were up to any person to remain saved, no person would remain saved. But God is greater than that. He has saved, He continues to apply that salvation, and His unconditional decree will continue to do so for all eternity.

Life application: Maybe we are being too harsh on our fellow brothers. Or maybe we are being too soft on them. Either way, our heart – our conscience – is condemning us because of it. Have you ever overly accused a fellow Christian of something and later felt remorse at it? Or on the other hand, have you seen a fellow Christian doing something and not been harsh enough on him? If so, maybe later you felt your conscience attacking you over it.

But maybe you handled the matter exactly as you should have, and yet you still are not even sure about that. In all three of these cases, God is greater than our heart (and our actions which condemn our heart.) He knows all things and looks inside of us, knowing what our true intent was and the love that our action was intended to be carried out with.

Because He knows us, even better than we know ourselves, He is there approving of the correct attitude of the heart, even if the appropriateness of the action we took is uncertain to us. Have confidence that He knows your heart, and your intent, and that He is there to soothe you when you talk to Him about such things. Just like the closest of

friends (and even more) He has an ear for our thoughts. Don't be afraid to talk to Him about them.

Thank You Lord, for knowing us even better than we know ourselves! Thank You for listening to the trials of our hearts as we walk uncertainly in some of the actions we take. You peer deep inside and know the very motives for the things we do, and so we know that we can trust that You are dealing in the fairest way towards us. We love You Lord. Amen.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

1 John 3:21

John now states a truth based on what he just said in the previous verse. There, he said, "if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart." Now, he begins his obviously truthful statement by saying, "Beloved." If the believer had a condemning heart, it does not exclude the fact that he is a believer. Thus, John reminds us of this fact. "Your heart may condemn you, but you are beloved still because of Christ." It is a touching note for one who is facing his own internal accusations.

Next, he says, "if our heart does not condemn us." The exact opposite proposition is now stated. A person in Christ may have a condemning heart. If so, God is greater than that troubled state. However, a believer may not have a heart which condemns. The conscience is clear, there is no secret sin or hidden failing known to the individual. Such a person lives out his life with the Lord on his mind and at his side at all times. In such a sweet spot, John says, "we have confidence toward God."

The word translated as "confidence" signifies "boldness of speech." When one speaks openly, he has confidence in his words. This is the attitude which is possessed by the one who is confident, or bold, toward God. His heart is right with Him, and so when he speaks (out loud, or simply in his heart) to God, there is nothing which hinders his words that is secretly hidden away and that he would be ashamed of.

John is not speaking of deserving such a state, as if "I have earned the right to speak boldly before God because of what I have done." The humblest person on the planet, who feels he is completely unworthy of God's grace, may still have this confidence. It is one which speaks not of deserving, but of understanding what God expects and having done those things according to His will.

A person who has been given a car may feel he is undeserving of having been given it. But when he goes to register it, he has complete confidence that he has a right to do so, and that there is nothing wrong in his ownership that should hinder the process of registration.

On the other hand, someone may have stolen a car and is worried that registering it might be problematic. Or, he may have legally bought the car, but fudged on the amount paid, thus the taxes were cheated to some extent. Or, the car may have passed through several hands before it was registered, and in the process, something was introduced into the transfer which was not wholly legal. Or, etc. In such a case, he may actually own the car, but there is no confidence toward the state that the registration process will go unhindered.

This is what John is referring to. Deserving or not deserving the car (or the salvation) is not what is being considered here. It is the state of the believer in his continued walk before the Lord.

Life application: John is making an *a fortiori* argument, meaning “with even stronger reason.” Such is a situation in which if one thing is true then how much more will a second thing be true?

- 1) If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.
- 2) If our heart doesn’t condemn us, how much more then will we have confidence before God!

We have complete intimacy towards God in our prayers, in our relationship, in our position in Christ. In this verse are the words *pros ton theon* which are translated as “toward God.” These are the same words used in John 1:1 where it states, “with God.” It reflects an intimacy as if you were standing face to face with the Lord.

Taking all this in, we can infer that when we act, live, pray, etc., we should do it with a pure conscience and in a manner that keeps our heart from condemning us in the things we do. When we live this way, we have a special confidence that allows us complete comfort and even a sense of restful peace as we live in His presence. As it says in Acts 17:28 –

“...for in Him we live and move and have our being...”

Because we live in the presence of God, because our actions are in the presence of God, and because our very existence is in the presence of God, when we have pure hearts and an undefiled conscience, we have a confidence and an assurance which is unshakeable.

However, let us think back to what it is like when we don't possess these qualities. When they are lacking, we have the ever-present reminder that we are still in His presence and He is aware of the things we are doing, even apart from His will. Let us endeavor to be in His will and have confidence towards Him.

Lord, what peaceful assurance we have when we are living in Your will and conducting our lives in a manner pleasing to You. Remind us by convicting our consciences of our need to live in a way which is pure and undefiled all times. We pray this knowing that You will do more than we ask or imagine. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 1 John 3:22

John just spoke of confidence before God when our hearts do not condemn us. In this state, John writes, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him." Immediately, this seems like an unconditional grant, and that if we want a new Mercedes, it will show up in our driveway in the morning. In fact, this is how certain groups take this verse. To them, God is a cosmic ATM, and wealth comes about by simply claiming it. James dispels that type of nonsense –

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures." James 4:3

One cannot "ask amiss" and expect to get what he wants. Further, it is not only the appropriate asking which brings about what we desire. John next states, "because we keep His commandments." The verb is in the present tense, indicative mood – "We are surely keeping His commandments." The word "keep" signifies "to observe." One may "keep" his word, for example.

John will explain what this means in the verses to come, but it has nothing to do with observing the Law of Moses. In fact, observing the law as a means of obtaining God's approval is a mark of pride, and thus it excludes exactly what John will say in the next verse. This is because the law is not based on faith, but on works. But works are

excluded from the equation as begins to be seen by the final clause, “and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

Again, the verb is in the present tense, indicative mood – “We are surely doing those things which are pleasing in God’s sight.” The word signifies doing (such as the will of God), producing (such as bearing fruit), and so on.

Again, the keeping and doing are based on what God has set forth – keeping His commandments and doing what is pleasing in His sight. Unless those things are being actively tended to, one cannot expect to “receive from Him” whatever he asks. And, as noted by James, what is asked must be in accord with His will.

Life application: This verse is one of great expectation for the believer. John’s words contain a wonderful promise that God hears every prayer and that none are left unattended. However, and as was noted, it is not without conditions attached to it. The believer who receives must first give. He must give of himself by actively keeping God’s–

- 1) Commandments – those things which are explicitly named in the Bible as expected of believers. These are not options.
- 2) Those things pleasing in His sight – these are the general things that are implicitly taught in the Bible and that lead to a whole, rounded, and faithful walk in Christ.

If we don’t act faithfully on His commandments and if we don’t do what is pleasing in the sight of the Lord, then how can we expect to receive whatever we ask from Him? Can we expect this from our parents? Can we expect it from a business when we go shopping? Can we expect it from our government agencies? Of course not! Unless we do as we’re asked or told, no one will fulfill our wishes.

And finally (and just as important) – we cannot expect whatever we ask if it is not in accord with His will. It is faithless at best to demand anything of God. He is in heaven and we are on earth. When God doesn’t directly give us what we ask for, it is because He has given us what is best for us indirectly. He has responded according to His glory and according to our needs, both realized and unrealized by us. He knows what they are even if we don’t.

Lord God, may we never claim anything in Jesus’ name, but rather may we humbly ask for those things we desire, and which are in accord with Your will, knowing that You will respond according to our obedience and according to Your glory. Forgive us if we are

faithless, and help us to make the corrections in our lives so that we may be pleasing vessels, ready for Your use. Amen.

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. 1 John 3:23

In the previous verse, John said, “because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” He now says, “And this is His commandment.” John goes from the plural to the singular. The singular, then, is the commandment of God, and it is in relation to “His Son Jesus Christ.” God’s commandment is “that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”

To do the commandment of God, one must do this thing. This is how John closed out his gospel –

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”
John 20:30, 31

What is presented then builds upon what is said in John 6:29 –

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”

Believing in Jesus being sent from God is the work that is necessary. In believing in this, one will believe that He is the Son of God (meaning deity) and believing on His name as well (meaning that He is the incarnation of the Divine Name – YHVH). All of this is tied up in the thought.

John next says, “and love one another. As He gave us commandment.” This is the command of God the Son. Jesus stated this commandment in the Gospel of John – in verse 13:34 (and which is substantially repeated in 15:12) –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

Together, these form the “commandments” noted in the previous verse. However, one cannot escape the truth that when John says “His commandments” in the previous

verse, and then “His commandment” and “as He gave us commandment” in this verse, that the two are united in one thought. The commandment of God and the commandment of Jesus are considered as one – meaning that Jesus must be God.

Understanding this, there is a commandment which cannot be overlooked in the process of keeping His commandments. In other words, we can “do” all day, and still not be “doing” what is necessary.

For example, the word says to refrain from sexual immorality. One can do that and still not meet the main requirement which will make a person pleasing in the sight of God. In fact, a person can “do” everything that is asked of him in the entire New Covenant except the one thing that John mentions, meaning believe in the name of Jesus Christ, and he can be as far from God as Satan himself.

And in believing in Jesus, one is naturally expected to be obedient to the command He gave to love. Though they are two things – believing and love – they are united as one. They cannot be separated. This will be further explained in the next chapter, especially in 1 John 4:9.

John is showing that faith and love are a unit. This then provides the clarification needed to understand the previous verses. Someone might argue that “doing” is sufficient to meet God’s commandments, even if we don’t believe. This is incorrect. If one is to do what is right, he must rightly believe as well. The doing part is loving one another, but a person can love every believer on the planet and not be a believer in the name of Jesus, the Son of God. If this is the case, then his love of those people does not make him right with God. The two commandments unite as one whole.

Life application: This verse may very well sum up the expectation of the Christian as well as any other verse in the New Testament. When John says we are to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, he uses an aorist verb. This indicates the initial conversion of a believer. This requirement is stated by Paul in Romans 10:9, 10 –

“...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Believing on the name of Jesus means believing on everything His name represents in the context of “Lord.” Jesus is our God united with human flesh. He is able to save us,

freeing us from our sin debt. He is able to continue to save us despite ourselves, etc. Secondly, after believing, John brings in loving one another.

Love for other Christians is to be the defining characteristic of the faithful (those who have believed). Let us live as if we believe it truly is the case! Paul shows us the importance of love in this manner in 1 Corinthians 13. Take time today to read that short passage and think on it as you go about your day.

Lord God, for those who have believed in Jesus Christ, it was with the heart, trusting in Him for our salvation. Since that time, we have not always been faithful, and we have failed to love our fellow Christians as we ought to have. Forgive us of this and lead us to the point of loving them, even as You love each of us. To Your glory we pray, Amen.

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. 1 John 3:24

John spoke of keeping “His commandments” in verse 3:22. In the previous verse, he then spoke of “His commandment,” meaning God’s commandment, that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. He also mentioned that we are “to love one another as He’, meaning Jesus, “gave us commandment.”

John now again speaking in the plural writes, “Now he who keeps His commandments.” It is obvious from the way John structured verse 3:23 that he is saying that Jesus is God. The Father gave commandment concerning the Son, and the Son gave commandment concerning love. Both together (being God) gave “His commandments.” John notes that he who keeps God’s commandments “abides in Him.”

One only has to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God once. That is keeping God’s commandment. As noted, John used an aorist verb. Believe at a certain point and the commandment is fulfilled. At the same time, the other commandment – which is to love one another – is fulfilled. This was seen while considering verse 3:14.

John was not speaking of the individual love between two people. As we noted then, a non-believer can be married to, and love, a believer (1 Corinthians 7 shows that such unions exist, even from a biblical perspective). However, the nonbeliever has an internal hatred toward the message of Christ (he does not believe). In this state, he abides in death. In abiding in death, there is a hatred for what the believer (even a person he loves) stands for.

The thought of loving one another is revealed in how a person stands in relation to Christ. It is not speaking of the emotional love between people, but of the love of God in Christ. Until one comes to Christ, regardless of the love between any particular people, the state of hatred toward the identity with Christ remains. However, in believing in the Son, the love towards other believers takes its proper place, and it provides a demonstration of the state of the believer abiding in God.

But more than abiding in God, John also says, “and He in him.” This is the sealing of the Spirit which is found in Ephesians 1 –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

Paul calls this sealing of the Holy Spirit a “promise” and a “guarantee.” The state of God abiding in the person is realized when the person believes in the name of God’s Son and in the loving of one another through that act. This is exactly what John next confirms, which is in complete accord with what Paul says. He finishes the verse with, “And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

This is John’s first mention of the Spirit in his epistle, but naming Him here is a confirmation of what he has been writing about. If we have done the one thing that God expects of us by believing in Jesus (and which then fulfills the second commandment of loving one another), we are sealed with His Spirit. In this, we know that God abides in us. The word states it is true, and we are to accept that by faith. There is no need for an outward demonstration by God of the sealing of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues or so on. Rather, our love of one another is sufficient evidence for us to be assured it is true.

Life application: It is important to keep this verse in the context given, which is speaking of belief and love as the overarching commandments. In believing and loving, we abide in Him and He abides in us. John is not speaking about the Law of Moses in any way, shape, or form.

The Law of Moses and in fact the entire Old Covenant law, is set aside in Christ. This is mentioned explicitly several times in the book of Hebrews and elsewhere. It is obsolete, it is set aside, it is annulled, and it is nailed to the cross.

If you are in a church that mandates any Old Covenant precept– Sabbath Day observance, tithing, etc., then you should discuss this matter with the church and determine why they are clinging to that which is unprofitable. If they continue with their improper doctrine, it's time to leave that church.

If we are in Christ, let us not grieve the Holy Spirit by trying to reintroduce that which has been set aside by the glorious work of Jesus our Lord.

Yes, Lord God – we will endeavor to live faithfully and love wholeheartedly. We will do this because it is what You desire of us. May our lives be testaments to You and Your work at all times. May we not attempt to purchase that which You have already paid for through our own futile efforts. Rather, may we trust in the grace You offer through the giving of Your Son. To Your honor and glory we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1

John again uses the word “Beloved” to introduce an exhortation that he earnestly wants his reader to pay heed to. There is a danger which will arise if his words are not heeded, and so to avoid that, he draws us close to himself with this word. His next words begin to convey this thought, but they are words which have seemed to fall on deaf ears throughout the church age, “do not believe every spirit.”

When he says, “do not believe every spirit,” the ISV gives the proper sense of the words by translating it as “stop believing every spirit.” The verb is a present participle. In other words, he was countering a person or persons who were at that time presenting false messages to his audience. But this still applies to us today – “Stop believing every spirit...” However, to do so requires discernment. After one has discernment, he must then apply that discernment. This is seen in the words, “but test the spirits.”

One can have no discernment and be unable to test the spirits. One can have discernment, but then fail to test the spirits. John calls for both. But discernment cannot come without knowledge, and knowledge in this matter cannot come without reading and remembering what is contained within the Bible. This is because the Bible is from God. Therefore, it will reveal what is not of God. As John then says, “whether they are of God.”

If “the spirits” call for some type of action or belief which is contrary to what is outlined in Scripture, they are false. The list of such things is almost endless because people have failed to simply “test the spirits” by making a rational and reasonable comparison to what the word of God states. That which is of God will be in accord with His word. That which is not of God will be at variance with it. The standard is the word of God. That which is opposed to the standard comes from that which is false. This is why John then says, “because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Here we see the antithesis of verse 3:24, which spoke of the Holy Spirit. John brings in false prophets who then convey a false spirit. As he often does, he uses the antithetical method to strike real contrasts to help us understand the truth. Just as light and darkness are opposing forces, so the Holy Spirit is opposed to the spirit of falsehood.

In the Old Testament, false prophets presented a message which was in opposition to that of the true prophets. With the introduction of the New Covenant, these false prophets present a message which is in opposition to that of the true apostles. John's referring to such false teachers is not unique. Both Paul and Peter speak of them as well-

"For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." 2 Peter 2:1-3

The apostles are in agreement on this, there is the spirit of truth, and there is the spirit of error. There are true teachers, and there are false teachers. There is revealed light, and there is the darkness of deception. And, as noted above, there is only one way to be able to truly discern between the two. That is by knowing Scripture, and then making a reasonable comparison between what is presented there, and what is then presented by a teacher (or false teacher) of the word.

Finally, and as is obvious, Vincent's Word Studies notes that the words "have gone out" are in the perfect tense, indicating "that the influence of their going out on their false mission is in operation at the present."

Life application: Unfortunately, it is in our nature to *want* to believe the sensational or exciting. Because of this, it is incredibly easy to get drawn into deceit and lies. This is especially true when we don't know our doctrine well.

Christians give a great deal of their money and effort to people who don't say anything of value from the Bible. Instead, they manipulate choice verses and give promises of blessing while filling their own coffers.

If you are ever tempted to send someone money because you can “reap a harvest,” then you have been deceived. If you believe you can be healed by someone over the telephone after “sowing a seed,” then you have been deceived. If you believe someone has accurately picked the date of the second coming of Christ, then you’ve been deceived. These things should be obvious, but it is much nicer to believe a lie, filled with hope, than it is to believe the truth which delays that hope – even if it is in God’s good timing to do so.

Remember that “false prophets” are simply “false teachers.” They are instructing in that which is a lie, manipulating the truth for their own benefit. You are responsible for your own doctrine, so never take anyone’s interpretation of the Bible at face value. Rather, go and research it for yourself. This is noteworthy and yet is what is expected in the believer.

Heavenly Father, give us wise and discerning hearts concerning the things relating to You and Your word. Help us not to be drawn in by teachers who have hidden motives that are not in line with the gospel of Jesus. Instead, help us to discern that which is right and that which is wrong, so that our time and resources will be properly dedicated to You. Amen.

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 1 John 4:2

John just noted that we are to “test the spirits” in order to determine if they are of God. One concrete test is now provided concerning this. That is evidenced by the words, “By this.” John will make a declaration that will confirm a truth. That truth is, “you know the Spirit of God.” If we are to test the spirits, we can be certain that in our testing of various precepts, one that meets the following criteria is from the Spirit of God. And that is, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.”

The first thing to understand, then, is that any spirit which does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh cannot be of God. It is obvious on the surface. The Greek of the statement more literally reads, “Jesus Christ, having come in the flesh.” This is what the word “confesses” is referring to.

One of the significant points of this statement is that Jesus didn’t come “into the flesh,” as if there was a human who became the Christ at some point during his life. Rather, Jesus Christ came as a human, as is stated in John 1:14 – “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” It speaks of the incarnation where God united with humanity.

Next are the words “has come,” or more literally, “having come.” The verb is a perfect participle. We are not confessing a Christ who came but is no longer the Christ. Rather, He came and abides in the flesh still. He is forever united to humanity – the God/Man. What occurred in His coming is a one-time and for-all-time event. And this coming is defined as “in the flesh.”

The thought takes us in two directions. He came, and He came “in the flesh.” It signifies that there was a point in the existence of Christ that He did not have flesh. Thus, it speaks of the deity of Christ as much as the humanity. He is fully God, but He also came (and abides) in the flesh. The second direction is that He truly bears flesh. It is not that He merely appeared to be human as Docetism claims. Rather, he is literally clothed in humanity.

Because of this state, he could – and did – fulfill all things according to the laws given to man, meaning the Law of Moses. He literally suffered as a human. He also literally died in fulfillment of the law and on behalf of others. This then is a confirmation of verse 3:16 which said that “He laid down His life for us.” This literally happened, in a real body, and it was a body that God had united with. This state in which Christ came was, therefore, fully sufficient to accomplish all things according to the order of men. This is what the author of Hebrews states –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore, 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. ¹⁸For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Hebrews 2:14-18

It is the confession that this is actually what occurred – God united with flesh and came and dwelt among us – that is the “of God.” This means the source of such a confession finds its source in God and it proceeds from Him. “To confess that Jesus the anointed is come in the flesh, is to confess that there is a medium of spiritual communications between the visible and the invisible world, between earth and heaven. It is to confess that there is one Mediator for all men” (Maurice).

Life application: One thing that we can be completely sure of is that if the Bible says something, then nothing will contradict what it says and still be of the Spirit of God. This is an important axiom to remember because churches and Christians ascribe a ton of things to the workings of the Holy Spirit which clearly can't be such. Instead, they are the fanciful dreams of people – meant for good or for harm. A very good case in point is the speaking of tongues.

Paul gives very specific guidelines for the speaking of tongues in his letter to the Corinthians. This was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, any “speaking of tongues” in a church that doesn't adhere to those guidelines is only made up drama and not a working of the Spirit. Are the tongues translated? Are the tongues spoken one at a time? Do no more than three people speak in tongues during the service? If these three (and other) requirements – as a minimum – are not met, then it is not of the Holy Spirit – it was an invention of the person in an attempt to gain attention.

Likewise, when a pastor, teacher, etc. confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, then he has passed one of the basic tests necessary to be considered sound in his message. It isn't the only test, but it is a necessary one.

“Confess” means to openly acknowledge this truth. Unless this is done, no confession has been made. The mode of the confession – when speaking of Christ's manifestation – is “in flesh” with no article. Thus, it demonstrates the completeness of what occurred. And, as noted above, what John says is in the perfect tense (having come) and therefore indicates Jesus' incarnation is permanent.

No one can speak truth about Jesus unless he confesses that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, that He is fully God and fully man, and that this incarnation is permanent. The permanence means He wasn't resurrected in spirit only, but bodily. Likewise, this resurrected body is eternal in nature. Listen carefully and make sure these points are acknowledged as truth.

Heavenly Father, may we never stray from the words of the Bible into things which are either sensational or detracting from its truth. Instead, give us wisdom in understanding Your word so that we will not be foolish in our worship or duped in our beliefs about the Person and work of Jesus the Lord. To Your glory we pray this! Amen.

...and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 1 John 4:3

John now returns to the concept of the Antichrist that he discussed in verses 2:18-22. In verse 2:22, he said, He is Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. As explained, that was referring to the Father/Son relationship, meaning that Jesus Christ is born of God and thus He is fully God.

To deny the deity of Christ is Antichrist. John now confirms that, while continuing his thoughts concerning testing the spirits. He had just said that “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” That speaks of the incarnation. To confess the incarnation of Jesus Christ is a spirit that is of God. Now he says, “and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.”

A more literal translation of the first part of this verse would read, “And any spirit that not confesses Jesus Christ in the flesh has come, from God not is.” It is stated in a negative form, rather than a positive. John is drawing lines in the sand with his theology.

His use of “confess” is in the present tense and, as has been the case many times in this letter, is speaking of a person who does not actively and consistently follow through with an action. In this case, it is to confess that Jesus has come in the flesh. Sure, anyone can say Jesus is God incarnate to impress an audience, but he can also be speaking a complete lie. If he truly believes this is so, he will continue to confess it and live in such a manner that he believes it is really the case.

Another interesting point is that there is a definite article before “Jesus.” In essence, it says, “...does not confess that *the* Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.” Why would John do this? It is because there were, there are now, and there will continue to be, people who claim faith in Jesus, but *it is not* the same Jesus described in the Bible. They are proclaiming a “false Jesus.”

The words of John’s statement are obvious on the surface, but they needed to be said. A denial of the deity of Jesus, who is also fully human, is not of God. One must accept the incarnation, as it is presented in Scripture, or that person is not of God. A list of some of the heretical teachings found during the church age are Adoptionism, Docetism, Apollinarianism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism (also known as Monophysitism), Monothelitism, Patripassianism, Psilanthropism, Sabellianism, and Tritheism. Each introduces a subtle change in what is considered orthodoxy, and eventually it will lead to a total breakdown in sound theology.

This list is not an all-inclusive list of heresies. Some of them affirm Jesus is human while not God. Some affirm He is God, but not human. Some divide His life up into being only

human at times, and then endowed with deity at others. And so on. The main point of John's words is that Jesus is God and He is human – fully and forever from the moment of His incarnation.

But even this can be misunderstood. Some say that Jesus was created in the womb of Mary, and then God united with this physical body. This is a heresy because it denies the actual human lineage of Jesus. It means God could have created a body for Jesus in any woman. The fact that He is born into a Jewish family is incidental to the story.

Rather, Jesus is of the lineage of Abraham, Israel, Judah, David, and so on because he was conceived – not created – in the womb of Mary. Rather than God creating a body, He prepared a body – meaning that He tended to the genealogy of Christ from the beginning of man's time on earth. The genealogy was carefully and precisely aligned for Christ to be born at a specific moment, to a particular person, in the nation of Israel.

One can debate if some of the heresies mentioned above qualify for John's definition concerning Antichrist or not, but they are heresies nonetheless. As he says, "And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist." The word "this" is pointing back to his already-penned words – "every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."

Such a spirit is that of the Antichrist "which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." The spirit had been warned about. John confirms that even at the earliest times within the church, there were already heretics who denied this fundamental truth. Instead of simply accepting the incarnation of Christ, as described by the Old Testament writings, and as confirmed by the apostles, the spirit of Antichrist blossomed, and it has continued to be expanded on by heretics who are of the Antichrist.

What John is saying here is not that any particular person is the Antichrist, but that this is the main point that characterizes the spirit of Antichrist. Someday, the Antichrist will come, and he will be one who espouses this doctrine, and who also fits the other prophecies which refer to him.

Life application: If you have studied Mormon theology, you will see that they believe something entirely different about Jesus than that of biblical Christianity. They profess a false Jesus – a Jesus which is of the spirit of the Antichrist. Islam denies that Jesus is God incarnate and is therefore of the spirit of the Antichrist. This is the test John lays out so clearly.

Either one teaches that Jesus Christ is fully God, clothed in human flesh, or he is under the control of the spirit of the Antichrist. Be attentive to this – John could not have been any clearer in his presentation. We are expected to believe this as a fundamental truth of our faith. To deny Jesus as coming in the flesh means one has never called on the Jesus of the Bible and therefore his condemnation remains.

Heavenly Father, though we may struggle with the concept of the incarnation, we accept it as truth because this is what Your word proclaims. Jesus is fully God and yet fully Man – Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Thank You for sending Jesus to reveal You to us in a way in which we can comprehend. What a wonderfully magnificent Creator You are to do what You have done! Amen.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

John now contrasts the faith of the believers he is addressing to the spirit of the Antichrist which he has been speaking of. In verse 2, he said, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” He now says, “You are of God.” The implication is that they have confessed that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

The word “you” is plural and refers to all of the recipients who have rejected the false prophets and influence of the devil, the spirit of the Antichrist. It is also in the emphatic position, “You are of God, in contrast to those I have just referred to.” As this is an epistle now in the Bible, the word “you” also includes us if we have confessed that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

John then again, as he has so tenderly done in the past, calls his audience “little children,” using the Greek word *teknia*. He says that his little children have “overcome them” meaning the false prophets and the spirit of the Antichrist. He states this in the perfect tense, indicative mood, meaning that they overcame them in the past, continue to do so, and it is a certain fact.

The false prophets put forth lies, and in following those lies, a person can be swept away into falsity before ever believing the truth. However, by believing that Jesus came in the flesh, one overcomes them. This is important to understand, because a person may later be told something contrary and accept it. This will then count for loss of rewards, but not a loss of salvation. The person who has overcome has done so once and for all. It is a

surety for them. And the reason that it is so is “because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

Christ is greater than the false apostles, the false teachers, the false prophets, and even the Antichrist. When a person comes to a saving knowledge of Christ, the One who is greater than all of these created beings resides in him and, therefore, that person is secure – forever – in Christ. Jesus told His apostles of this –

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Christ has overcome the world. Therefore, those who are in Christ have also overcome the world and those of it.

Life application: The action is complete to this point, but his letter is one of warning for believers. We need to continue into the future with our eyes on Jesus and our hearts and minds on the things of God, lest we get swept up into false doctrine and false belief. Standing fast in sound doctrine was, is, and will be possible because believers now have the Holy Spirit. Although the “He” isn’t specified in these verses, it is referring to the Holy Spirit. This is certainly the case for several reasons –

- Verse 3:24 speaks of the Spirit given to us by God.
- After this was mentioned, John speaks of testing the spirits and continues with the contrast between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the Antichrist.
- It is the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, fills us, and leads us into all righteousness.

Because we are indwelt with the Spirit of God, we have the power to resist and overcome the devil, but we can’t be filled with the Spirit if we are disobedient to the Word of God. Further, we can’t be filled with the Holy Spirit if we don’t comply with the acknowledgment of Jesus having come in the flesh. Nor can we be filled with the Spirit if we fail to accept Jesus’ authority. Being filled with the Spirit, then, is not an emotional state in any way, shape, or form. Instead, it is a state brought on by obedience and then opening up to the Sovereignty of God in our lives.

When we do those things which please the Spirit, we will be filled by the Spirit (it is passive in the Greek – we open ourselves up to the filling). This is what we are to pursue at all times.

Thank You, Lord, for the Gift of Your Holy Spirit – that He indwells us is the greatest comfort to our hearts and souls. And knowing that when we are obedient He will lead us to all righteousness, it spurs us on to wanting to be obedient. Because of His power in us, we are able to overcome the false prophets, the spirit of the Antichrist, and even the work of the Devil himself! What an honor to have such a close and powerful Helper in our times of need! Amen.

They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 1 John 4:5

John returns to his mode of making contrasts. In the previous verse he said, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” In this verse, he makes a bold contrast from those words –

You/they
Of God/of the world

True believers in Jesus Christ are of God. In contrast are the false prophets and those who listen to them. They are of the spirit of the Antichrist and are of the world. They are sons of the Devil and the system he employs. The world in which they live and fellowship in is the source of their speech, even if it isn’t necessarily the subject matter they teach. Understanding this, John says, “Therefore they speak as of the world.”

In John 3:31, Jesus said, “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.” The source of what Christ Jesus spoke was not of this world, because He was not of this world. Those in Christ have their source in Christ, and thus they are “of God.” Those who are not in Christ, speak as the world. Because this is their manner of speaking, John says, “the world hears them.”

When someone is in Christ, he should naturally want to speak about Christ. He will speak about the temporary and futile state of this world, and also of the anticipation of what is ahead for believers. Those who are not in Christ have no such hope, nor do they have a heavenly source for their thoughts. They are of this world because they are grounded in this world. Because of this, the world (meaning the people of the world) will naturally listen to them.

Until a person is willing to accept the premise that this world is not as it should be, and that God has a redemptive plan which is in motion which is intended to bring us back to

the state we were originally intended to be in, they cannot accept those things. Further, because Jesus is the central point of that entire plan, they cannot accept Him or what He has done in any meaningful way.

It requires a complete change in one's worldview to say, "I accept the premise that this world is not truly what I was intended for, and that God has remedied that by sending Jesus." This is why Jesus said this to his apostles –

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

John 15:18, 19

There is actually a state of enmity between those who are in Christ and those who are not. This may not be an overt state. In other words, a husband and wife may love one another, but when only one is saved, there is the knowledge that "She thinks she is going to heaven and that I am going to hell." This is the hatred that John is referring to. The husband hates that message, and therefore, he hates the Source of that message. His heart must first turn to Christ to receive the truth of what Christ speaks concerning such things.

Life application: In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul equates all people as sons of Adam and "of the dust." But he says that the believers who bear the likeness of Adam will also bear the likeness of the "heavenly Man," that is Jesus Christ.

The people John speaks of today were and remain sons of Adam. Just as Adam believed the lies of the devil, so these people continue to follow in the same lies. Any teaching contrary to the Bible is a part of this system, but specifically denying the manifestation of Jesus as coming in the flesh is what John is speaking of. Their denial, whether explicit or implicit, is of the world and the world rejoices in hearing them.

Accountability to the true God is thrown out the window so that the deeds of darkness and wickedness can abound. Take time today to evaluate your stand on the Person of Jesus – it is through Him that we are granted eternal life and fellowship with the Creator; nothing else will do. Stand firm on the faith which leads to eternal life!

Lord God, keep us from the influence of those who speak from the system of the world, but whose hearts are cold to You and the wonderful message of reconciliation You have given. It is through the shed blood of Jesus that we overcome this world and are brought

back to You. No other path is acceptable. But we thank You that this one path is available. May You be praised for bringing about this glorious restoration! Amen.

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:6

John now uses the same formula as the previous verse, but provides it in a contrasting form to indicate believers who listen to the true apostles, rather than unbelievers who listen to false prophets –

“They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. (4:5)

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us.” (4:6)

The contrast is made, and the divide is absolute. This division comes down to one thought alone – “Has Jesus Christ come in the flesh or not?” Explained, this means, “Is Jesus Christ the Son of God, meaning fully human and fully God, or is He not?”

The Greek of “He who knows” is literally, “The one knowing.” It is an ongoing and increasing knowledge of who Christ is. Paul, for example, was knowing, but he was also growing in his knowledge and pursuit of the Lord. He strove daily to attain to the full knowledge of God in Christ. For those who teach this as a truth, and for those who receive it as such, John says, “We are of God.”

Just as the false teachers and those who accept their message are of the world, those who accept the message of the true apostles are of God. As this is so, John continues by affirming that “He who knows God hears us.” If someone accepts that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, he will hear the apostles’ message. This is inclusive of, and probably especially speaking of, John’s gospel and his epistle which he is presenting.

He, and any with him, had come to present this truth many years after the writings of the other gospels and other epistles. Confusion had crept into the church over these issues. False teachers had come in with false messages, and John had written his gospel and epistles to speak out against these things. Those who are of God will receive his words as intended. Those who are not will not.

For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have John’s words, but they do not “hear” them. Their teaching denies the incarnation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. And so, even

though they have the word, it is meaningless to them. They remain of the world. As John says, “he who is not of God does not hear us.”

Such people, and so many others, simply do not hear the truth of Scripture concerning Christ. They reject its obvious truths, and they are not “of God.” They remain in Adam, under the devil’s authority, and their condemnation remains. Finally, John says, “By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

Here, John uses a term that is different from verse 4:2. There it said, *en toutou*. Here it says *ek toutou*. Of this, Vincent’s Word Studies says, “It occurs only here in the Epistle. *Ἐν τούτῳ* is in this: *ἐκ τούτου* from this. The former marks the residing or consisting of the essence or truth of a thing in something the apprehension of which conveys to us the essential nature of the thing itself. The latter marks the inference or deduction of the truth from something, as contrasted with its immediate perception in that something.”

In other words, John is saying that we can make a logical deduction concerning what we believe. We are of God when we believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. In this acceptance, we have tested the spirits (verse 4:1) and we know that we have followed the spirit of truth. Likewise, we can test the spirits of those who do not believe this truth, and we can know that they are not of God, and that they have followed the spirit of error.

In this, John is using “theological math” where 1 plus 1 will equal 2. We can logically and accurately determine such things by simply adding the points presented and coming to a right answer to the equation.

Life application: When John says, “we are of God,” he is referring to himself and the other apostles who are speaking the truth of God’s message. It is actually kind of nuts to think otherwise when John was one of the apostles who lived with, saw, felt, heard, and learned from Jesus.

If someone proclaimed a false message, all his audience would need to do would be to talk to John about what was and what wasn’t true. He is a messenger of Jesus and therefore whoever “knows God” would listen to him and his message (including his letter which is now included in the pages of the Bible.) Likewise, to know who is not of God, just look at who rejected John and the other apostles’ messages (and those who teach false messages today.)

This isn't difficult and it doesn't take a degree in theology to figure out. When someone teaches or preaches what is right from the Bible, he is teaching based on the spirit of the truth. When he isn't, he is teaching from the spirit of error. If there is disagreement, then all we need to do is go to the Bible and read to find out what is right and what is wrong.

It should never cease to amaze us that those televangelists who promise blessings, healings, and miracles get any support at all. People should be checking out their teachings against the Bible. There we can see that they take Scripture entirely out of context and misapply it for financial gain. And yet, they keep getting richer. And those who listen to them keep finding themselves in the same unhappy circumstances. This is also the case with other false teachings. Things that are unprofitable, and yet which flourish, are because of the desires of tingling ears. These things spring up from deep wells of unsound doctrine.

The best part of waking up shouldn't be what's in your cup. Rather, it should be the time you spend in your Bible. Make every effort to know and cherish this incredible gift of God.

Give us wisdom, O God, into the vast riches of Your word. Keep us from error and being deceived by people with unsound agendas. Instead, give us right reasoning concerning those things which are profitable in Your eyes and which will bring You glory! This is our hearts' prayer today. In Jesus' name... Amen.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7

This verse marks a slight change in the overall topic being discussed, and yet it will be found to fit harmoniously into the overall flow of thought. John starts with "Beloved" indicating those who have experienced the great love he is about to discuss, and which comes through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. Such faith results in adoption as sons of the Living God.

John previously mentioned love as a test of faith, such as in 3:10-24, but now he will explain the logic behind this claim. He begins this by saying, "let us love one another." In 1 John 3:23, he said that "we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another." This is speaking of the fraternal love which is to be exhibited among believers, and it was called a "commandment" in verse 3:23. He again states that we are to love one another and then explains that saying, "for love is of God."

The meaning of this is that God is the source of properly directed and true love. In verse 4:4, speaking to believers, he said, “You are of God.” In verse 4:6, including himself in his words, he says, “We are of God.” As this is so, and as “love is of God,” it is only reasonable that believers are to love one another. How could love be of God, and believers be of God, and yet believers do not love one another? It is illogical thinking. With this understood, John says, “and everyone who loves is born of God.”

This is obviously speaking of love in the way that God loves. On the earth, there are all kinds of love which are a part of the human emotions that we possess. But there is the godly love which can only come through union with God, because apart from God, such love cannot be understood. If it cannot be understood, then it also cannot be rightly expressed. But when one is born of God, he loves in the way which is expected of God because he “knows God.”

The love of God is found in what God has done in and through Christ. Man was in sin, but God remedied that situation by sending His Son. It is from the greater to the lesser. God, the greatest of all beings, was willing to express his love towards His creatures through Christ. He had nothing to gain from it, and it was the highest price that could have been paid, but He did this as an expression of His perfect love.

In coming to God through Christ, we know God – meaning we understand His heart – in a way that could never be understood apart from Christ. This is the love that John speaks of, and it is the same love that John asks us to express towards fellow believers.

Life application: Why should believers love one another? It is because everyone born of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ knows God. To know God is to understand the complete expression of love because God loves infinitely. To know this calls for us to strive to emulate what we know.

When John says, “let us love,” he is speaking of continual practice, not just a one time or fleeting occurrence. Rather, it should reflect everything we do and think about, and it should be expressed to all with whom we fellowship in the Body of Christ. Just as this love is from God, and thus it gives evidence of a sound relationship with Him, in the same way our love should give evidence of a sound relationship with those around us.

The way John terms “born of God” indicates a completed action. Through God we have been begotten and we remain his child eternally. As is taught clearly and without exception, the doctrine of eternal salvation is referred to here. One is born of God and is

forever a child of God. The only thing we can expect from backsliding and waywardness is a loss of joy in this life and a loss of eternal rewards in the next.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, let us be found acceptable as sons and daughters of the One who adopted us into His eternal kingdom. Let us love, even as we are loved.

Lord God, because love stems from You, and because You are the Source and full expression of true love, fill us with the desire to emulate You in loving those around us. May our lives be examples of the love that we received when we came to Jesus. You sent Him despite our failings, and so help us to love others – even in their own failings. May it be so, and may it be to Your glory, O God. Amen.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:8

In the previous verse, John said that “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” Now, he goes beyond a simple one to one comparison. Instead of saying, “He who does not love is not born of God,” he goes even further in his words by saying, “He who does not love does not know God.” Further, the verb “know” is in the aorist tense. He has never known him. The separation between the two is absolute.

This isn’t just a mild disconnect that can be overcome by the person. Rather, this person has no ability to understand God, and his feelings toward God are missing entirely, or they are completely skewed. The reason for this is then stated by John with the words, “for God is love.”

The Greek here must be properly translated to fully understand John’s intent. It literally reads, “because the God love is.” An article precedes “God,” but not “love.” What this means is that the statement is not reversible. We cannot say, “Love is God.” God’s nature is love, but we cannot limit Him to only love. God is the embodiment of love, but love is not the embodiment of God. Such a statement would allow the worship of love, as a “god.” Rather, God is to be worshipped because He is love, among other things.

In his writings, John says that God is Spirit, God is light, and God is truth. The Bible also says that God is jealous, God is righteous, God is holy, and so on. None of these things are God, but they reflect His nature. Such statements tell us that they are not qualities of God which he merely possesses, but they are statements about His very being.

And further, John doesn't state it in the form of an adjective – "God is loving." As Jamieson-Faucett-Brown notes –

"...for then John's argument would not stand; for the conclusion from the premises then would be this, This man is not loving: God is loving; therefore he knoweth not God IN SO FAR AS God is loving; still he might know Him in His other attributes. But when we take love as God's essence, the argument is sound: This man doth not love, and therefore knows not love: God is essentially love, therefore he knows not God."

Life application: John makes specific points about the nature of God in his writings. What he says in his points cannot be mistaken (although they can be twisted by perverse thinking), and his clarity in them gives us real and valid insights into our Creator.

Taking John's words in their proper context, we can now see why he says, "He who does not love does not know God." How can one be acquainted with God – who is by His nature love – and yet not possess the very quality defined by that acquaintance? It is not possible.

However, it must be remembered that we do are not the very definition of such attributes. Nobody apart from God can claim, "I am truth," or "I am love." We can only emulate God. As believers, there are times when we aren't loving. And yet, we can still be included in "everyone who loves." Our shortcomings do not negate the state that we have been brought into.

And even more than focusing on ourselves, if we look to God and focus on Him, we can find absolute assurance. Because God is love, we can know that He isn't just loving at times, but that everything He does is based on love. We may see things happen that appear to show an uncaring God, but that is because we cannot see the purpose for what occurs. But everything that God does is done with the loving intent which stems from His very nature.

If someone says, "A person being cast into hell by God is unloving, and therefore God is not love," he has misunderstood God's other attributes. God is just. One attribute (such as love) cannot override another attribute (such as justice). The way that the tension between God's many attributes is relieved is through the cross of Jesus Christ. For example, God's infinite love can be poured out on man because God's justice is served in Christ's substitutionary and atoning death.

All things are brought into harmony once again through what God has done in Christ. As Paul says –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ 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 Corinthians 5:18, 19

For those who have come to God through Christ, God – who is love – has accomplished complete, absolute, and eternal reconciliation. For us, God can now and forevermore express His infinite love towards us.

Of one thing we can be sure, O God – You are love. When we look to the cross of Jesus and reflect on the marvelous majesty of His great work, we can see love in a way which transcends all other things. Knowing this about You allows us to revel even more in Your glory. May we never forget that You are love, and because of Jesus we are the objects of Your love! Thank You for this wonderful assurance. Amen.

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 1 John 4:9

John now continues the same thought that he has been giving for the past two verses. In verse 7, he said, “and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” In verse 8, he said, “He who does not love does not know God.” He is speaking about the state of love either existing in a person or lacking in a person. That continues with this verse with the Greek words *en hēmin*. Rather than, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us,” the Greek reads, “In this the love of God was manifest in us.”

John has shown that belief and love are actually one inseparable idea –

“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” 1 John 3:23

To love without belief does not satisfy the expectation of God. To believe without love is to fail to obey the commandment given by Christ Jesus. But we are not given a commandment we cannot obey. Therefore, the “love of God is manifested in us” when we believe.

John uses an aorist verb, indicative mood, and passive voice. It happened at a set time, it is a certain fact, and the believer is the recipient of the action. Belief brings us into the state of love. At this point, our love can be acceptable to God. Before this point, we could love all day long and it would be of no true value to Him.

God cannot credit love as righteousness unless the person is already deemed righteous through faith in Christ. If He could, then faith in Christ would be unnecessary to be pleasing to God. This is why “God has sent His only begotten Son into the world.”

In this, the Greek more accurately reads, “His Son, the only begotten.” He enlarges and highlights the Son by stating it this way. God has “sons” as is recorded in Scripture. Israel is called His son in Exodus 4:22. Believers are sons of God, as is noted in both testaments as well. But only Christ Jesus is set apart as “His Son, the only begotten.” It is He who was “sent.” The verb, being in the perfect tense, reveals the completed and continuing results which stem from sending Him. And those results are “that we might live through Him.”

This is the purpose of the sending of Christ. Sending Him is how the love of God is manifested in us, but our living through the Son defines why God did this. In belief, we are saved, and in being saved, the love of God now defines our love, meaning it is now a love that is acceptable to God.

To more fully appreciate this, one must consider the words, “live through Him.” If we were not “alive,” meaning possessing eternal life, before coming to Christ, it means that we were still dead in our trespasses and sins. In this state, it doesn’t matter how much we loved others. We were dead in sin and God could not accept our love. But in living through Christ, our sins are atoned for, our state before God is changed, and our love – whatever level of love it may be – is now acceptable, because the love of God is manifested in us.

Life application: This verse, like others from John, is reminiscent of 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 everlasting life.”

It is important to remember that the term, “begotten,” and not, “one and only,” as many modern translations state, is the correct term to use. The reason for this is more than translational from the Greek, but it is scriptural based on Exodus 4:22 (mentioned above)–

“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.”

God has more than one son – in several contexts. Israel is called God’s “firstborn son.” We are also sons of God through adoption. Therefore, the term “one and only” is entirely incorrect. Additionally, the Greek supports “begotten.” Jesus was generated of the Most High and the power of the Holy Spirit through Mary. He is unlike any other. Because of these points, it is far preferable and proper to use the term “begotten.”

Also, John mentions “the love” of God. The article which precedes “love” isn’t referring to a general love, but the specific love, one which is particular to that demonstrated in the work of Jesus.

Because of the great love God has for the people of the world, He sent Jesus Christ to restore us to true and spiritual life, and to grant us eternal life – someday to be free from the trials, troubles, and temptations of this world. Let us never forget this great and awesome love, demonstrated at the cross of Calvary!

How tender and precious it is to be called a son of God because of the work of Jesus! We can now call you Father in a way which was never possible before. Thank You, thank You, O God, for the wondrous and extravagant love You have for us! Glory, honor, and majesty – they belong to You alone! Amen.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

In verse 4:7, John implored his reader to love one another. In 4:8, he noted that God is love. In 4:9, he then said that the love of God was manifested toward us in the sending of His Son. With that train of thought in mind, John now says, “In this is love.” In the Greek, the word love is preceded by an article, “the love.” This indicates the very nature of God. His love simply is – it doesn’t increase or decrease, but it is constant, complete, and perfect.

John will now define what this love of God is. Yes, it was manifest toward us in the sending of Jesus, but what does that really signify? Understanding this, he says, “not that we loved God.”

It may be true that we love God, but that is not the highest and most perfect manifestation of love. Even if we love God, it is not an all-encompassing love. We get

busy with life and forget the other things going on around us. We forget the time. And, we forget that God is even there. Our love toward God, if it even exists, is a directed thought which is not always being displayed or even considered. However, such is not the case with God.

John has already noted that God is love. There is no increase or decrease in His love. It is – always. Further, it is unconditional. That is seen first in the words, “but that He loved us.” Think of the vilest person you know of that is alive today – maybe a politician. What if that person becomes a Christian tomorrow? What would that mean to you? Probably relief that he finally came to his senses. Now, you can finally start to like him.

But God already loved that person. There is no time He didn’t love him, and His love for him did not increase after he received Jesus. As John says, “and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Nothing changed from yesterday to today from God’s perspective – only from ours. God sent Christ Jesus *before* anyone received Christ Jesus. Therefore, He loved you *before* you came to Him. He loved Paul of Tarsus *before* he came to the Lord. And, he loved Vile Vince the politician *before* he changed his ways.

Our love is an after-the-fact love. God’s love is a before, during, and after the fact love. God is love. And so God sent Christ Jesus to be for us what we could not be for ourselves. He became our “propitiation.”

God cannot look upon man with favor. Not because He doesn’t love him, but because He is Holy, Just, and Righteous. Because of sin, man is none of those things. Therefore, God must judge man’s sin, or He is none of those things. But because God is Mercy, Grace, Truth, and Love, God was willing to judge the sin – not in the man, but in His Son – in order to bring about a propitious relationship between the two. This is what the word “propitiation” signifies.

The word in Greek is *hilasmos*. It is found only here and in 1 John 2:2. It is an offering intended to appease an angry and offended party. Christ died on the cross, shedding His blood. Through His sacrifice, He provided the necessary propitiation which was foreshadowed in the Day of Atonement offering found in Leviticus 16 and 23.

Jesus Christ is the actual point of propitiation, but more, it is because of His death that this is so. To get a better understanding of the meaning of this word, and another word used by Paul, *hilastérion*, please refer to the commentary on 1 John 2:2.

In short, and understanding these two words, the implication is that without Christ Jesus, there would be no atonement for sin. But in Him, there is full atonement for all sin. And this offering was made *before* any person was saved. Thus, this is the highest expression of love. Its Source is God, its message is one of restoration, and it was sent out *before* any love toward God existed from those who would receive it. In this is love.

Life application: While we are looking out for ourselves and never considering God in our little world, God never forgets His creatures. He loves us regardless of how we have considered Him.

Our lack of love, resulting in sin, has caused a rift between us, and that rift needs to be mended. And so, God sent Jesus. It is He who restores felicity between God and man when we accept His work. Think on this today. Consider the perfection of what God has done for us through Jesus! He loved us, and He loves us.

O God, that You would send Jesus for us! It is more than we could ever imagine. What a great and splendid love You possess to restore us to You through the blood of Christ! May we never forget the majesty of this act, and may we never fail to proclaim it to others! Restoration and life are available because of Jesus. Hallelujah and Amen!

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

John began verse 4:7 with the words, “Beloved, let us love one another.” Since then, he has been building his case as to why this should be. Now, he completes that thought with the same words, plus a few concluding explanatory words. He, again, says, “Beloved.” The apostle demonstrates the very thing he appeals to by stating this. From there, he next says, “if God so loved us.”

This is the conclusion to be drawn from verses 4:7-10, but in particular the words, “that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.” God was willing to do this, even when we did not love Him. How much more then should we be willing to love those who are in our own family of the faith!

In this, the word “so” here is in the emphatic position. A direct translation would say, “Beloved, if SO God loved us...” This can be referring to either the manner of God’s love, meaning the type of love He displayed, or it could be referring to the extent of God’s love, meaning the lengths He was willing to go to. Both, however, merge into one thought when the cross is considered. It was a sacrificial type of love, and it was the ultimate extent that could have been demonstrated. As this is so, John concludes with

that same basic thought as is found in the words of verse 4:7, saying, “we also ought to love one another.”

God in His glory was willing to step down to our lowly level. God in His holiness was willing to interact with those who are unholy. God in His infinite being was willing to unite with His finite creation in order to redeem us. God who feels no pain was willing to allow the earthly body He united with to feel pain, suffering, and death. Such things, and all other such things, are given to us to learn from. They are examples for us to emulate, and they are the basis for the commandment to love one another.

As the Creator, Jesus Christ had the right to speak the words of commandment. As the Redeemer, He then has demonstrated exactly why it is so and the lengths to which we are to go in order to fulfill that commandment –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

Life application: Earlier in this chapter John was speaking of false teachers and the spirit of the Antichrist. In verse 7 though, he changed his direction to speaking of love. But the two ideas he’s built upon are not disconnected. If we go back and look at the entire chapter thus far and then evaluate this verse also in context, we can see where John has made love out to be a moral obligation.

He says “if,” but the term here is assuming the truth of the coming statement – “If God so loved us.” Right in the middle of this assumption of truth is the word “so.” This two-letter word is calling to remembrance the great and exalted actions of verses 9 and 10.

If this is so (and John confirms it is), “then we also ought to love one another.” So, think it through clearly. When John uses the term “ought,” he is placing on each of us a moral obligation – because God/so ought we. Now that we can see that, we can complete the picture by comparing the false teachers of verses 1-6.

John’s contrast is against them and whatever perverse teaching they employed that held to no moral absolute. They had teaching without heart; doctrine with no purity; and instruction without morality. Be attentive to such teachers, reject them, and instead hold to the strict and pure gospel of Jesus – the gospel which builds love upon love and which exalts the work of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, just as You sent Jesus to reconcile us to You, so also give us a change of heart so that we may be reconciled to those with whom we are at enmity. May You be glorified as we act in a manner that brings about complete harmony between each of us and those around us. May it be so, as we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 1 John 4:12

John now introduces a key point of theology into his epistle. As much as anything else, it is certainly based on his words of verse 4:7, where he said, "...everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." How can one know God? The answer is certainly not in having seen Him. In fact, for a person to claim that he has seen God is actually a disqualifying factor. He is to be rejected outright as a liar or a lunatic. This is because, as John says, "No one has seen God at any time."

In fact, the Greek places God in the emphatic position, and without any preceding article. It says, "God, no one at any time has seen." Verses from Scripture that appear to contradict this are to be evaluated on their own and in the context of what is occurring. But simply stated, the lack of an article before "God," signifies that John is writing about the divine Being – the unseen Creator – rather than the Lord, who is the visible manifestation of God.

The Lord manifested Himself to Israel at various times. These were visible appearances of the eternal Christ, who is God. But the divine Being – God – cannot be seen. John's words are to be taken as explicit and as absolute truth. Simple logic – even apart from Scripture – can easily demonstrate that this must be true.

If something (or someone) can be seen by human eyes, it means that there is matter to be seen. Matter did not exist until God created it. Further – time, space, and matter all came into existence at the same time. They are dependent upon one another, and none can exist without all three being present. Therefore, God – who created time – cannot have matter as a part of His Being. If so, He would not be eternal, nor would He be omnipresent, etc.

Understanding the key First Principles will help a person think clearly on such points. John's words simply confirm what we can know by thinking logically. However, that leaves open the question, "If no one has seen God at any time, then how can we know God. And, how can we know that someone is of God?" John answers the question clearly by saying, "If we love one another, God abides in us."

We don't need to see God to know that He exists. Our minds can figure out that there is a Necessary Being – meaning a Being who cannot “not” exist; He must exist. As we can know this, with all certainty, then He has revealed a way that we can know He abides in us. That is in our love for one another.

As seen in previous verses, this means more than love as humanity loves. It means loving in the way that God does – something impossible without first believing the gospel and being saved. In that conversion, we now have a confirmation that our love is of God and not of the world. This will be confirmed in the verses to come. But for now, John finishes with the words, “and His love has been perfected in us.”

This clause begins the confirmation concerning the “love” John is referring to as being that which stems from God. Anything that man possesses, including love, is limited and imperfect. However, if God's love is perfected in us, it signifies that this is – in fact – a godly love previously not possessed by us. That love of God is expressed through us because Christ now dwells in us. As Vincent's Word Studies rightly states, it is, “Not our love to Him, nor His love to us, but the love which is peculiarly His; which answers to His nature.”

This is why the words of John 3:23 cannot be taken as a work in order to be saved. There, John said, “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” It is not a work “for” salvation, but a product of salvation. One cannot possess this love of God unless he is saved. But in the possession of it, it demonstrates that he is – in fact – saved.

Life application: It could be that when you read this chapter and come to this verse, it may seem out of place. But instead, it is actually extremely well positioned.

As noted, the structure of the first clause is specially framed in order to show the very nature of God's Being – that He is Spirit. This is a concept demonstrated in both the Old and the New Testament, and it brings us to a very important point about people who claim to have “visions” where they have seen God. As stated earlier, they are either liars or delusional. No one has ever seen God – at any time.

Apparently, during John's time (and which continues until today) people were claiming to have seen God and had received special insights and knowledge from Him. John, however, is denying their claims – such people have left the boundaries of truth and have headed off into unsound areas of boasting.

What John is saying is that because no one has seen God, we can only know that He abides in us by the love we demonstrate. This is the “vision of God” which demonstrates His presence. If we love one another with His perfected love, then He abides in us and His love (the love He demonstrated in His Son Jesus) is our evidence of His presence in our lives. This is the true and clear revelation of God. Don’t be fooled into believing people who have deluded themselves with anything else!

O God, what more could we ask in this life than to see You as demonstrated in true love and faith? When believers are at harmony with one another, and are completely sold out to You, isn’t this a surer testimony of Your presence than any supposed vision? Yes! Because everyone can share in it – not just a select few, but all of Your chosen people! Perfect Your love in us so that we may reveal You to the world. Amen.

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

John begins this verse with words he has used several times, “By this.” He uses this term to open the door to his coming thought, which is to tell us how we know that the reciprocal relationship between us and God truly exists

Here John restates what he has already said in part of verse 3:24 –

And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

But it must also be noted that verse 3:24 gives the reason for this. It is a reason tied directly the reason John just gave for stating verse 4:13 (above) –

“Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him”
1 John 3:24

“If we love one another, God abides in us” 1 John 4:12

The connection between the two is that the commandment of Christ Jesus is that we love one another (as seen in 1 John 3:23). The seemingly drifting thoughts of John are not drifting at all. He is precise and careful to repeat and build upon his own words to show, time and again, what is proper concerning our relationship with God in Christ. Understanding this, his words of this verse can be more carefully analyzed. He begins with, “By this we know that we abide in Him.”

In John 3:24, he said we could know that He (meaning Christ) abides in us. Here, he says that we can know that we abide in Him. Christ abides in us, but we also abide in Christ. It is a two-way reality which is also referred to by Paul. An example of each would be –

Us abiding in Christ – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
Galatians 3:28

Christ abiding in us – “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27

John has said that we can know that Christ abides in us “by the Spirit whom He gave us” (3:24). That was based on keeping His commandments (as noted above). John now finishes this verse by saying that we can know that we abide in Christ, “and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” Both states – residing in Him, and Him residing in us – are confirmed by the giving of the Spirit.

But the giving of the Spirit must come in some manner. As we have seen already, the keeping of His commandment to love is not a basis for salvation, but a state which comes after salvation. John has already explained how one is saved in Chapter 3, and he has built upon that in Chapter 4. He will continue to write about this in the next three verses, confirming that a person is saved by faith alone, and that confession of that faith is both necessary, and that it is not a work – as some ridiculously claim.

Life application: John’s words of this verse aren’t just an introduction into something new. Rather, they are building upon what he stated in the previous verse, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.”

John is a master of the pen, and he builds carefully and precisely each argument and each point. In fact, he is so careful and so intentional, that his thoughts weave into a colorful tapestry. Each point overlaps above and below each previous and each subsequent point.

Had John said, “No one has seen God at any time...” and stopped, we would be left wondering how we could know God at all. But we aren’t left in that untenable situation. Instead, he tells us that love is one way of knowing Him. Another is because “He has

given us of His Spirit.” This doesn’t mean we receive an actual slice of the Holy Spirit, but rather we receive His indwelling – which is a seal of ownership.

As the Wycliffe Bible commentary states, “A believer can never obtain more of the Holy Spirit, for he indwells the Christian’s life in all his fullness. But the Holy Spirit can get more of the believer; that is, he can exercise complete control of the life that is yielded to him.” This thought is confirmed by Jesus’ own words –

“...for God does not give the Spirit by measure” John 3:34.

We are given the fullness of the Spirit, but we often fail to give the Spirit the fullness of ourselves. Yield your life, your actions, and your very soul to the Spirit of God and you will live in complete harmony with your God!

Lord God, that You would send Your Spirit to dwell in us is simply amazing. We stand in awe of the work You did and continue to do on our behalf. Thank You for Jesus and His work which allowed this close and personal relationship. All glory to You, O God! Amen.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 1 John 4:14

John again highlights the Father/Son relationship concerning Christ Jesus. This is quite purposeful. He has just said that we know that we abide in God and that He abides in us. He then gave the reason for this by saying, “because He has given us of His Spirit.” He now ties that fact into the idea of the Father/Son relationship. This will become fully evident after the next verse now, but to set that thought up, he provides the words of this verse, beginning with, “And we have seen.”

He is speaking of those who personally beheld Christ, and probably more specifically of the apostles of Christ. The idea of his words is that they not only “have seen,” but they intently observed what they saw, which is what the Greek word signifies. It was as if they were spectators in a theater, which is where the word *theaomai* (have seen) is derived from. It is the root of the word *theatron* which is the basis for our modern word “theater.”

These men had seen and observed carefully and therefore they can “testify that the Father has sent the Son.” They are qualified to bear witness of Christ, and therefore their testimony is both acceptable and reliable. The Greek verb translated as “has sent” is in the perfect tense, indicative mood. The sending of Christ is accomplished, and it is a

certain fact. It is this sending of the Son by the Father which makes the giving of the Spirit possible, and it is the giving of the Spirit which makes a knowledge of our abiding in God, and His abiding in us, possible. This is because God sent Jesus Christ “as the Savior of the World.”

The same word, translated as “Savior,” is found elsewhere in John’s writings in John 4:42 when Jesus spoke with the people of Samaria –

“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’”

However, the same word is used by Luke, in Acts, and by Paul, Peter, and Jude when referring to Christ Jesus and/or to God. The Father sent the Son in order to save the world, and the condition which must be met for this to occur is to be relayed to us by John in the coming verse. What John will say (and which is in accord with what he has already said) is not at all contradictory to the words of Paul concerning the gospel. Rather, they bolster what Paul says, forming a full picture of what the gospel signifies.

Life application: In reviewing John’s words, it is good to revisit 1 John 1:1, 2 –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”

Just as he did at the beginning of the letter, and elsewhere in his writings, John testifies that he has seen the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ. During chapter 4, John has been speaking of error in those who claim falsities about God, the Spirit, and related doctrine. Then just a couple verses ago, he says that “no one has seen God.” He is quite clear that people who claim to have seen God in visions are false teachers and liars. But what God has done is to reveal Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son.

The word of Jesus is the work of God in the physical world we live in. And this work is as glorious as it possibly could be! It is the work of salvation through the “Savior of the world.” Jesus is the one who saves us from the work of the devil and from the fallen state we are in. Should you be suffering in pains, trials, financial troubles, family troubles, or in any other way, remember that these things are temporary.

The world and its system are passing away. Jesus will herald in a new order of things which will completely remove all of these woes, replacing them with eternal and complete joy. John testifies to what the whole Bible proclaims – that God loves us and has a great plan and purpose for us if we will only allow Him to fulfill it in our lives. He won't override our free-will choices, so it is up to us to bend the knee and submit to the work He has accomplished for us. What a great, tender, and loving God!

The work is done, and the choice is ours! Call on Jesus and anticipate a glorious eternity in His marvelous light.

Marvelous indeed is the Lord Jesus! O God, thank You for Your wonderful plan and purpose for our lives. And this is not because we somehow merit Your favor, but because of Your infinite love and mercy. And so, we accept both willingly. May our eyes never stray from the Prize, which is Jesus our Lord! Amen.

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

1 John 4:15

John is methodically presenting what it means to be a saved believer in Christ Jesus. Following the train of thought from verse 12 shows us what is on John's mind –

- If we love one another, God abides in us and His love has been perfected in us.
- It is by the Spirit that we can know that we abide in Him and He in us.
- It is testified to by the apostles that the Father sent Jesus as the Savior of the world.
- Love is what demonstrates our position.
- The Spirit is what identifies our position.
- Christ makes our position possible.

Therefore, John next says –

“Whoever confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” vs 15

The Greek more precisely reads, “Who if any shall confess.” It is an aorist subjunctive verb. It is conditional, but if it happens at a certain point, then the result (which he will state in the second clause) will occur. As the Pulpit Commentary paraphrases this thought, “Whosoever has once for all taken up the position of confessing.” It is a one-time and for-all-time result based on meeting the conditions John puts forth, meaning confessing “that Jesus is the Son of God.”

In this, John again brings in the Father/Son relationship. This has been contrasted to the Devil and the Antichrist. One is either positionally under the Devil's authority and resides in the spirit of the Antichrist, or he has moved to being in Christ and under the authority of the Father. The way one makes this move is by confessing "that Jesus is the Son of God."

This is exactly what Paul speaks of. Paul gives the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 –

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

Paul then shows how this is appropriated in Romans 10:9, 10 –

"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Paul then shows what the effects of this process is in Ephesians 1:13, 14 –

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

Belief + confession = salvation (note; confession is not a work. Refer to Romans commentary). Salvation is then confirmed through the sealing of the Spirit. It is the same message proclaimed by both apostles.

When this process is followed by a person – believing, confessing, and being saved, John says, "God abides in him, and he in God." The verb is present indicative. Abiding is the result and it is a certain thing. One no longer needs to wonder if God abides in Him or not. If he has believed and confessed concerning Jesus – meaning that He is God come in the flesh – the indwelling has taken place.

As previously stated, the key of the entire process is "what Jesus." There are those who claim Jesus as their Savior, but they do not believe He is God incarnate. That is a false Jesus and thus they have believed a false gospel. God entered the stream of humanity,

uniting with flesh in the Person of Jesus. This is proven in the resurrection, and that is why Paul includes that point in the gospel (above) of 1 Corinthians 15. One must accept the work of God in Christ, as presented, in order to move from the Devil to God. It is that simple.

Life application: In the previous verse it was seen that Jesus is “the Savior of the world.” Yes, this is true, and He is the One that can bring salvation; no other name will do. But this in no way implies universalism. Jesus is not the Savior to everyone in the world, despite being the Savior of the entire world. There is a requirement for this salvation to be realized. This requirement is consistently stated in the Bible – faith in Jesus.

Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God is the vehicle of salvation, but faith is the gas which makes it run. In other words, anyone can say, “Jesus is the Son of God,” but not really mean it. Tied into this confession is the sincere belief that it is true. Also tied into it is what is implied in the confession. “Son of God” means exactly that, Son of God.

If God is God and God has a Son, then the Son of God carries the very nature of His Father – He is fully God. Likewise, man is man. If Jesus was born into humanity, then the Son of Man carries the very nature of humanity – He is fully Man. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God is a confession about the very nature of the Person, and it is a confession based on faith. This isn’t complicated, but it is so enormously twisted by cults – Gnostics, Arians, Mormons, etc. that the concept no longer carries the same meaning intended by the Holy Spirit who authored Scripture.

This shouldn’t be difficult for us to grasp, but it carries eternal consequences. If you are struggling with Jesus’ nature, pray to the Lord and ask Him to clear this up in your thinking. God has given you all the necessary information, and He wants you to process it properly. When you do, God abides in you and you in God.

Lord Jesus, we confess that You are the Son of God – born of God and bearing the very nature of Your Father. You came in human flesh to give us restoration so that we can now call on Him as our Father! Thank You for this glorious work, and may Your name be praised for all eternity! Amen.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16

John now continues to explain the state of love which he has referred to already. He has shown that believers can know that they abide in God and that God abides in them. This

comes from testifying to the fact that Christ is the Son of God, and thus fully God. In that, John then says, “And we have known and believed.” Both verbs are in the perfect tense, indicative mood. It shows the complete and continuing effects of what has occurred, and that this is an absolute fact.

Believers have known and believed, and they continue in this state. It is concerning “the love that God has for us.” The Greek reads “in us,” and it should be translated this way due to the words of the next sentence which speak of the love of God abiding in us.

The manifestation of the Son is what makes this love of God known. If God never sent Christ, how could we be sure of anything? But in the coming of Christ, when we were already dead in trespasses and sins, it shows how very much God loves us. John then repeats his words from verse 4:8, “God is love.”

As before, there is an article before God. It says, “The God is love.” Thus, the words cannot be transposed to say, “Love is God.” Love is merely an aspect of God, but He is more than love. Love, however, is not more than God. It is one of His characteristics that reveals His character to us. With this repeated for effect, John expands on it by saying, “and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

This is similar in thought to what was just expressed in the previous verse –

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

Confessing Jesus is what makes this union possible. When the union occurs, the state of love, which reveals God’s character, is now also realized in the believer. Thus, to “confess that Jesus is the Son of God” is to “abide in love.” The state results from the confession.

Life application: Through the apostolic testimony, there is the ability to both know and have faith in the great display of love that God demonstrated for us. This is why John says for a second time that God is love. Because He is, and because it is His very nature, then anyone who lives in that love must also abide in Him; the two are inseparable.

And if we abide in Him, then because of the nature of the relationship, He also abides in that person. There is a bond which is intimately woven together, and which is complete and unspoiled – the bond of the perfect love, which is God.

Because we share in that perfect love, it should then be the very mark of our lives as Christians. Although we are bound by our physical bodies, we can still strive to demonstrate God's love in our lives and in our actions. Let us determine to do so to testify to the world that God truly abides in us and that we abide in Him.

Lord Jesus, help us to be the proper and loving example of the Christian faith that You would have us to be. It is not an easy walk at times, but we truly wish to reflect Your love – the infinite love revealed in who You are. Give us that ability so that others can see You in us and desire that same love for themselves. Thank You for hearing our prayer, O God. Amen.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4:17

John now begins a new verse with, "Love has been perfected among us in this:" The question is, "Is he speaking about what he just said, or about what he will say." The two possibilities would be –

- 1) God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. It is in this that love has been perfected among us.
- 2) Love has been perfected among us in the fact that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

The NKJV assumes the second option and places a colon after the first clause, indicating that it is so. However, this is incorrect. First, if it were not the first option, love would be a work required for salvation. Such an error in thinking could be assumed from 1 John 3:23, which seemingly makes both belief and love a part of being right with God. This also could be inferred from 1 John 4:8.

However, as was revealed in the commentaries there and subsequently, the love spoken of there is a result of salvation. Secondly, "boldness in the day of salvation" is not a perfection of love. Rather, it is a result of it. To say otherwise is to put the cart of boldness before the horse of perfected love. But to stand boldly before God on the day of judgment without being in Christ is an emblem of arrogance and pride, not of the boldness that comes through confidence in the Redeemer's work. The thought is reflected in the letter to the Hebrews –

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not

have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

Even in our weaknesses and failings, we can be confident through Christ. But to come to God without His perfections is presumptuous and worthy of condemnation.

Understanding that John was saying of those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them, he now says, “Love has been perfected among us in this.” First, there is an article before “love.” It says, “The love has been perfected among us.”

Next, the word translated as “perfected” is *teleioó*. It is in the perfect tense, indicating that it is done and fully accomplished. However, John’s intent here is not that of absolute perfection in love, but rather a state of complete love or full development of our love. The word signifies “to consummate, reaching the *end-stage*, i.e. working through the entire process (stages) to reach the *final phase (conclusion)*” (HELPS Word Studies).

In coming to Christ, man’s love is brought to full development. Before coming to Christ, even if we loved, God could not accept that love because it was not rightly developed. However, in understanding God’s love in Christ, and coming to Him with that understanding, our love has become fully developed. Essentially, God can say, “You have seen the highest expression of love and have accepted it as such.”

We can see that it is not saying that the absolute perfection of love is evident because John says, “that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment.” The fact that we will face a judgment (see 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 & 2 Corinthians 5:9-11) implies completion, not perfection. If we (including our love) were perfected when we came to God through Christ, there would be no need of further judgment.

In understanding this, meaning that our love is perfected in Christ, John says that we now know “that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” There is an article before “judgment,” indicating a set day of judgment for believers, not an ongoing judgment as if we are being judged from day to day. Rather, we are living our lives, doing things according to how we feel concerning that day of judgment (the day of THE judgment), and we will receive our rewards and losses at that time.

Despite being the day of the judgment – and as Paul notes the terror of the Lord in the two references from 1 and 2 Corinthians above – John tells us that, at least in the aspect of perfected love, we may have boldness when we come before Him. The reason this is so is “because as He is, so are we in this world.”

John’s words are in the present tense. It is reminiscent of his other words, such as in 1 John 3:7, saying, “He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” John notes that what is foundational in making us like Him is found in this perfected, fully developed love. Again, it is this which makes it possible for us to abide in God and God to abide in us. The love is not a requirement for salvation but is rather a result of it.

In now possessing this love, we can have boldness – without fear – in the knowledge that we will meet Him for judgment. The meeting is certain, but it is to be one which will be handled perfectly, and the souls of those who have come to Him will not be condemned, even if they are a bit toasty after the judgment is over.

Life application: Our love is complete, or fully developed, in that we can be certain that on the day we stand before Christ Jesus, He will look upon us in favor and not condemnation – all because of our proclamation of faith in Him. Paul explains that we are free from condemnation in the book of Romans –

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:1

Though we have fully developed love because of our faith in Jesus, we still fall short in our daily walk and in our Christian life. The greater our deeds during this walk of faith, the greater our rewards when we face the Judgment Seat of Christ.

So, let us endeavor to live for Him as best we can. Let us contemplate the Lord throughout our days. Let us meditate on His word as we come in and as we go out. Let us praise God with every marvel our eyes behold. And let us pursue a right and holy life – to the glory of God, and for the benefit of our walk with Him.

Just as God is love, we are now included in that perfect love of God when we belong to Him. Our love is complete in the work of God through His Son, Jesus. Let us act as if it is so.

O God! What a bargain You have set before us – call on Jesus and receive eternal life! And added in with this is the complete and full love of God, promises of rewards, and

freedom from any possibility of condemnation. What a supremely glorious Creator You are! All hail You Lord God Almighty! Amen.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

John has just noted that “the love has been perfected among us.” He continues that thought now, again placing an article before “love.” In fact, there are articles throughout the verse in the Greek, demonstrating the definite nature in which John is speaking.

Young’s Literal Translation states, “Fear is not in the love, but the perfect love doth cast out the fear, because the fear hath punishment, and he who is fearing hath not been made perfect in the love.” As “fear is not in the love,” it shows that it has no state of existence in the perfected love that he just referred to, and which he will again refer to with the (from Young’s) words, “but the perfect love dost cast out the fear.”

The very state of fear is cast out when the perfect love exists. The two are mutually exclusive and cannot dwell together. Understanding that John is speaking of the perfect love of God which comes through faith in Christ, John’s words apply in that context. In other words, one cannot say that there is no fear in a general state of love.

A person may love his wife. If she gets cancer, there exists a state of fear in both the wife and in the husband. Such things are not what John is speaking of. The perfected love is the love realized in a person when he comes to God through faith in Christ. Therefore, the fear which John refers to is a fear which is found in a separation from God.

In that separation, there is fear “because fear involves torment.” The word translated as “torment,” *kolasis*, is found only here and in Matthew 25:46 where it refers to eternal punishment for the unrighteous. It is “*torment* from living in the dread of upcoming judgment from *shirking one’s duty*” (HELPS Word Studies). When one is not in Christ, there is fear of punishment because a person can never know with certainty if he is right with God or not.

However, in Christ, there is the absolute assurance that He died for our sins, and that we are no longer imputed sin. Because of this, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Him. As there is no condemnation, then “the fear” has been cast out. This is the state that John is referring to. For those who are perfected in “the love,” there is no

fear. But, as John notes (from Young's), "and he who is fearing hath not been made perfect in the love."

If someone has not come to Christ, he cannot know if he will make the standard set by God. Therefore, there remains a state of fear in him because of his state of imperfection in "the love." God's love does not abide in him, and therefore God does not abide in him, and he does not abide in God.

One could logically argue that a person who blows himself up as an offering to the false god of the Muslims is confident of his actions and he has no fear. But that is a separate issue of following a false god. To do this means that acceptance is predicated on one's works in order to please his god. This is not the gospel. Rather, it is a false gospel based on the supposed demands of a false god.

If he knew of the true gospel, there would be fear because he would no longer know if his self-detonation would actually get him to heaven or not. Thus, the state of fear actually exists, even if it is not realized because of a lack of knowledge. This is not God's fault. He has made the offer, even if the person doesn't know it. His state of condemnation remains (John 3:18).

There is also the case that many saved Christians fear death, even though they have believed in Christ. This is a normal human emotion which is also not what John is referring to. Along with death often comes other things, such as pain, loss, and so on. But this is not the fear he is speaking of. He is referring to the fear of condemnation – something that happens after death, not during the process of death.

Our fear of death is a natural part of us, given to us as a protection. Our fear of condemnation is as well. It is given to us to seek God. When one seeks God, finds Christ, and is perfected in the love, the fear of death (meaning that which results in eternal punishment) is removed.

It is illogical to believe that Christ has granted believers eternal life just to remain in a state which still fears eternal punishment. The two are mutually exclusive. Thus, the doctrine of eternal salvation is a part of trusting in Christ. If a pastor, priest, teacher, or preacher teaches that salvation can be lost, he is teaching a falsity which does not cast out the fear. As this is so, one should not pay heed to any teacher of the Bible who teaches that one can, in fact, lose his salvation. It is poor theology, bondage, and it is a doctrine which has not been perfected in love, nor has it cast out "the fear."

Life application: What John is telling us, is that as believers, we have boldness when judgment day comes because of the love which is in us, meaning the perfected love of God. As this is so, there should be no fear (for our eternal destiny) as we wait on that coming day.

As Christians, we are expected to know the perfect love of Jesus Christ. If God sent Jesus to the cross to pay the debt we owe and to suffer the torment we deserve, then the payment has been made and the punishment has been meted out – it is over. The cross is the ultimate expression of God’s love for us because it involved the torment of Jesus in our place. This perfect demonstration of love has removed, the anxiety of condemnation from us, and where anxiety is removed all fear (of eternal punishment) should also be done away with.

For the believer who has accepted Jesus Christ, but who has not completely comprehended what this means, his full realization of God’s love is still incomplete. This is the reason why he has fear when he sins – “Oh, I hope I don’t lose my salvation;” “O, I just know God will send me to hell for what I did;” “O, how could God ever forgive me for that?” All these involve fear and demonstrate that the individual lacks the fullness of God’s love in his Christian walk.

Jesus has (past tense) forgiven you for your sins when you have called on Him. Your judgment can never lead to condemnation, only a loss of rewards. This is the love of God which casts out fear. Do you believe it? Then act like it!

Lord Jesus, we struggle with sin in our lives, and we struggle with the thought that our sin is greater than Your forgiveness. We want so desperately to understand the doctrine of eternal salvation – completely and absolutely. We know that as the light shines on us concerning this, that all of our fears will truly be cast from our minds. Thank You for being patient with us as we grow in You and in the knowledge of Your infinite grace. Amen.

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19

Note: In case your Bible translates this differently and leaves off “Him,” it is because some ancient manuscripts don’t include that word. In this case, it would read “We love, because He first loved us.” This is not a point which affects doctrine, but it is good to note the variation. Understanding this, John says in this translation, “We love Him.”

The verb is present tense, indicative mood – we are loving him, and it is a certainty. However, in the coming verses, John will note those that do not love God, and he will state the reason for it. Therefore, for him to make the statement now must indicate an absolute change has been effected in us that allows him to say, “We love Him.” Otherwise, it would be a conditional statement, which it is not.

Therefore, like in the earlier verses, we see that the love spoken of is a part of our nature after coming to Christ. It is a love that is acceptable to God, not simply because of a change in our love, but because of a change in us. This is then supported by the words, “because He first loved us.”

God loves His people, meaning humanity – even before we love Him. Because He is love, His love doesn’t increase or decrease. It simply is. He first loved us, and because He did, He sent Christ Jesus to save us. In our salvation, we can now love. This is obviously not the act of loving, or of being loving, but it is rather the state of love which is defined by being a believer in Christ.

The tense of the verb “loved” signifies an action that occurred. Of course, we know what that action was – the cross of Jesus Christ. We love God because He demonstrated His love for us in the Person of Jesus. This goes for those before the cross, and for those after the cross, because Revelation 13:8 says that Christ Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Those before the cross anticipated the Messiah. Those since Christ’s coming look back on that event. In both, faith in what God has promised is what sets the person apart. Thus, “He first loved us” shows that it was a love that always has been – God is love. Thus, our love is a love which evokes gratitude. It is reactive, owing its source to God, who first loved us.

Life application: As amazingly incomprehensible as it is, God united with human flesh – His creation – and walked among us, demonstrated holiness and perfection among us, and then willingly endured the cross in front of us. All of this was done to signify the immense love of God. There is simply no other explanation, and anyone who would attempt to lessen the significance of the cross is worse than a demon.

Those who attempt to connect the cross with material blessing, financial gain, prosperity, status, or any other thing have a perverse streak in them which is a complete departure from the Christian faith. The cross signifies our reconciliation with God and our sins removed. Therefore, our goal and desire should be to bring honor to Him and

fellowship with other believers. We are free from enmity with God and we are able to love Him intimately, just as He first demonstrated His intimate love for us.

What a story! What a Savior! What a God! He is Abba who adores us, the Father that never fails, the Papa who protects, the Daddy who delivers. Set aside time today to simply walk and talk with this wonderful Creator who loves You so very much.

Heavenly Father, at one point in each of our lives, we were in a battle against You. We had a shield up and our sword out. But instead of destroying us where we stood, You sent Your Son between the battle lines. He demonstrated Your love in such an immense way that we could no longer rebel. Accept our fallible and failing offer of love in return for the marvelous love with which You first loved us. Amen.

If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

1 John 4:20

John now builds upon his previous words, which said, “We love Him because He first loved us.” It is a statement of fact based on our position as believers.

Therefore, what he now says must be taken from that perspective, and it must be thought through with care. The premise is that of unconditional love. God loved us at a point in time when we were His enemies. The fact that Christ came to redeem us means that we needed to be redeemed. No person is redeemed apart from Christ. Therefore, the love John writes of is an unconditional love.

Now he begins with, “If someone says, ‘I love God.’” He has already said that we love God. This is because we understand that God has loved us, and He has done for us what was, therefore, a true act of love. As believers who have realized this, the proposition he now sets forth cannot be speaking of believers. The fact that we love God has been settled. Therefore, he is referring to someone who has not been perfected in love; he is not a believer. If this person says, “I love God,” and yet he “hates his brother, he is a liar.”

The two are mutually exclusive, and John will explain why this is so in a moment. But are there believers who do not love their brothers or their fellow man? The answer is pretty much unanimously, “Yes.” We have warring feelings that come over us, we have disagreements, and because of these things, real animosity arises in us. Does this mean

that we are liars about loving God? No, as noted, that proposition has already been settled.

Therefore, this is not (it cannot be) speaking on the same level as the human-based emotional love that we feel. Rather, it is the understanding that those people around us are people that Christ died for too. Even in their possibly completely depraved state, we were in the same condition as they were – enemies of God and destined for condemnation. Our love for those people is to be displayed in an earnest desire for them to glorify God, be saved through Christ, and not be cast into hell. To desire for them to go to hell, while we – who were in the same position as they were – is contrary to understanding our position in Christ.

How much more for those who are not saved. They claim they love God, but they hate others who are in the same fallen state that they are in. They cannot love God, because they do not understand what God has done for them in Christ. If they did, they would come to God through Christ and be saved. They would also desire for those who are in the same position as they are to also be saved.

This is then supported by John's next words. He says, "for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" The proposition is obvious on the surface. He cannot. A person who sees his brother in a fallen, unsaved state, and who hates that person, is only demonstrating that he hates himself as well. They are in the same state.

John is writing about the perfected love of God. It is the love that has come to the understanding of what God has done, and thus who God is – God is love.

If God is love, it means that God loves – unconditionally. Those who have not understood this love remain in darkness, and they cannot love God. Hating their brother, who they can see, reveals that they do not love whom they cannot see. The unseen God is the perfecter of love. In not having accepted His love in Christ, their love has not been perfected.

Life application: What we see today is a more aggressive repetition of a lesson John has already stated in 1 John 3:17 –

"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

As John has built his logical case for truth and sound doctrine, he has inserted obvious questions for us to consider. Today's question is painfully blunt and demands an answer that is rather unpleasant when the mirror is on us. Too many people hold up their hands and say, "Yes, count me with the 'God' family...I really love Him!"

However, after their proclamation, they show complete disregard and even contempt (hates his brother) for the brethren. John says that we don't need to wonder about this person's motivations or sincerity concerning God – he is a liar. There is no love of God in him.

When we as humans have contempt for our brother who we can see, how can we have love for God whom we can't see? Contempt for our brother and love of God are mutually exclusive. As you evaluate yourself and others, ensure you use the biblical model. If your evaluation is based on doctrine, truth, and love, you will be able to identify the truth of the person. As Jesus said to His disciples –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

This commandment will be the subject of John's next words.

O God, we have complete faith in You and in Your word. We know that Your promises are true even though we have never seen You. But we honestly struggle with loving our brethren. Give us the ability and wisdom to handle difficulties concerning them in a way which demonstrates our love for You. In Jesus' name we pray! Amen.

And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also. 1 John 4:21

John has just expressed the idea that when someone says, "I love God," and yet he hates his brother, there is no truth in that person; he is a liar. In coming to Christ, we are brought into the state where our love is perfected. We can see what true love is because we have seen what Christ was willing to do in order to save us. He loved us when we did not love Him. In expressing the love of God in this way, He then relayed that those who follow Him must act accordingly. And so, John says, "And this commandment we have from Him."

A commandment has been given. As this is so, it is our obligation to do what He has commanded. Christ is the Lord, He is the Head of the church, and He is the executor of the New Covenant in His blood. It is this act which reveals the length God was willing to go through to express His love to us. Therefore, John next restates the command he has heard. It is “that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.”

As already seen, the command was given in John 13. But the surrounding verses will help clarify the full intent of what Jesus commands –

“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:31-35

Jesus not only gave the commandment, but He did so in relation to His going away. In His absence, it is the responsibility of the believer to act as He did. The reason for this becomes obvious. In expressing His love, those who saw it could then understand His nature. Those who follow Him, in expressing that same state, will then continue to reveal His nature. In loving one’s brother, we are indirectly reflecting Him and loving Him at the same time.

This is why at Paul’s vision of Christ, Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Paul was persecuting Christ’s followers. Thus, he was indirectly persecuting Christ. Logically, in demonstrating love to the brethren, we are then loving in Christ’s stead, and we are loving Christ as well. To not do so shows a defect in our love. But John has already been shown that “love has been perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).

Therefore, the commandment is set forth to remind us of our state, and to continue to live in that state at all times. The definition of love, given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, shows us how to be loving, and how to know if we are complying with the commandment which has been given.

Life application: The Old Covenant relayed a similar truth to what the commandment of the New Covenant relays –

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it?*"

²⁷ So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:25-27

Jesus says in Matthew 22:40 that on these hang all the Law and the Prophets. If all of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two things, and if in Christ, then we have inherited eternal life, then our love has been perfected because of our being in Christ. Therefore, we can claim we love God, and we understand that love is more than emotion. It is a state which says, "Without Christ, this person stands condemned. It is my obligation to love him, even as Christ loves him, so that he can enter into God's love as well."

For those in Christ, it says, "This person is in Christ. He is a member of Christ, and therefore it is my obligation to love him, just as I love Christ."

Therefore, we are to act upon the love that has been perfected in us, demonstrating that it is a part of who we are.

Heavenly Father, You loved us before we loved You. There was a divide between us that could not be crossed by us, and so You sent Christ to make the bridge possible once again. Help us to act in a like manner toward those who have yet to find out the truth of what You have done, loving them in the same manner in which You first loved us. It is a hard path for us in these fallen lives of ours, but through Christ we can do it. May it be so, and may it be to Your glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 1 John 5:1

“Whoever believes.” John has used the word translated as “believe” rather sparingly in the first four chapters of this letter, but he uses it seven times in this chapter. He is coming to the end of the letter and is culminating his thoughts with an amazing amount of information for the believer to process. In this chapter are several very difficult verses to grasp and there is even a verse which is highly disputed as to whether it even belongs in the Bible. Let us not lose sight of the importance of what John is saying over such differences thought.

In verse 4:7, John said, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” He now begins with, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” It is a confirmation of what has already been said, which is that the love John speaks of here is not a condition for salvation, but is a product of being saved. If one believes that Jesus is the Christ, then he has accepted the premise that Jesus came in the flesh and also came of God. He lived in that state, He was crucified and buried, and He rose again – proving that He is fully God.

In believing that, the love which is of God becomes a part of his very nature. In having this new aspect, John says, “and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.”

The words, “Him who begot,” refer to God. In coming to God through Christ, we now love God – understanding what He has done for us in Christ. This is the idea of what John was referring to in 1 John 4:20 when he wrote concerning claiming to love God but hating one’s brother. Such a person has not loved God, and he is a liar, because he has not come to God through Christ. The hatred is evidence of this. Hence, when one loves God (who begot), they also love “him who is begotten of Him.”

Cambridge lays out the overall thought process here –

Every child of God loves its Father.

... Every believer in the Incarnation loves God.

Every believer in the Incarnation loves God.

Everyone who loves God loves the children of God.

... Every believer in the Incarnation loves the children of God.

Christ is the only begotten of God in the sense of transmission of divine life – From Father to Son. However, believers in Christ are begotten of God through the Spirit (see 1 Peter 1:3). As we are all “begotten” of God in this sense, then we will possess the love which is of God for those who are begotten of Him. Again, this is not the love that we think of in normal human relations, but of the love which is of God, and which marks us as believers. It is a unifying love which will be fully realized in us when we are also perfected. But it is what marks us out at this time, just as the sealing of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 14) does.

Life application: John says that faith in the fact that Jesus is the Christ is an essential truth to being “born of God.” Being the “Christ” means that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies that state this One is both human and deity. One cannot claim a belief in Jesus Christ and disregard that He came in the flesh and dwelt among us. However, if one can mentally acknowledge this and then avow its truth, then he is born of God. Once this is realized in the believer’s life, a change takes place which is identifiable as the work of God.

It is God who “begot” us because of our faith. In turn we love Him for this action. We become a member of the family of God and there is harmony and peace between us and Him. However, there is more to identify us as children of God. Just as we love Him who begot us, we also are to love other believers who are begotten of Him. In other words, and is stated several times already in his letter, John tells us that our love for other believers is an identifying mark of our conversion.

Therefore, we need to strive as if it is as important to us as it is to God – to be faithful in loving our family of believers. How can we be a part of a family we don’t love? Just as we are excluded from fellowship with our earthly family when we don’t love them, we are likewise excluded from our heavenly family when we act in hatred toward them. Let us make every effort to display the love which is of God, even as we walk in these fallen bodies, awaiting the time when what we now possess can be fully expressed.

Heavenly Father, Your word – time and again – reveals to us our failings as members of Your family. We have not been as loving towards our fellow believers as we should be. Certainly, this causes a wall between us, and we know this must be corrected. Help us to change so that we can be pleasing members of Your household at all times. Amen.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 1 John 5:2

Again, as he has repeatedly done, John begins the thought with, “By this.” In this, he is not making an inference based on conduct, but he is saying that we perceive the fact he will state. In other words, one can keep a commandment for whatever reason and actually not know that he is doing right. If the speed limit is 40mph, and someone is driving 40mph, it doesn’t mean he knows that is the speed limit. He is simply doing what is right without knowing it.

Or, a person can know that he is doing right by keeping a commandment. “The speed limit is 40mph, and I am keeping that law. Therefore, I am doing right.” This latter person is who John is referring to. “By this,” is equated to, “I mentally understand the situation.” Understanding this, John says, “By this we know that we love the children of God.”

In knowing the commandment he will refer to, and in applying the precepts of that commandment, one can know that he loves the children of God. John noted loving the brethren (who are the children of God) in 1 John 3:14 –

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” 1 John 3:14

In loving the brethren, we know that we have passed from death to life. But how do we know we love the brethren? He tells us with the words, “when we love God and keep His commandments.” John has spoken of loving God “because he first loved us” in the previous chapter. Right after that, he said that if someone says, “I love God,” but he hates his brother, he is a liar. So how can we know we love God? It is if we “keep His commandments.”

This is exactly what Jesus (who is God) was referring to in John 14 –

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15

The two are united in one thought – “If, then you will.” John referred to this in 1 John 2–

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:3, 4

To understand what he was saying in those verses, refer to corresponding commentary, but in short, this is not referring to the Law of Moses. We are to believe in the Son, and

we are to love our brethren. In this, we can know we love the children of God. This is because one who believes in Christ Jesus is believing in the Head of a body comprised of people. One cannot love the Head without loving the body. They are one. Therefore, John's words perfectly explain the relationship between believers, who are the children of God.

Life application: John's words bring up a point that needs to be readdressed. If some are the children of God, and we can know how they are children of God, then this by default means that those who don't comply with what he says are not children of God. When we consider what he says, we will see that the vast number of people in the world don't qualify as "children of God." So, what does he say? It is –

- 1) "when we love God," and
- 2) "keep His commandments."

He says these in a united way. We cannot love God if we don't keep His commandments. Likewise, the reciprocal is true. If we don't keep His commandments, we prove that we don't love Him. This brings up the need to review 1 John 4:20, 21 –

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also."

The commandment is love – specifically love for the brethren. If we don't have this love, which John has been so clearly explaining, then we are not keeping God's commandments and we therefore don't love God.

Let us believe in the Son, honor the Son, and love the Son. In this, we bring honor to the Father. But, in loving the Son – who is the Head of the body – we are to love the body which is comprised of His people. If you are having troubles loving your brethren in Christ, you are not alone. But you should make every attempt to be the pleasing soul God wants you to be by demonstrating true and sacrificial love for your fellow Christians.

Lord Jesus, move our hearts so that we will be able to love our fellow Christians as You have directed. Because this is Your commandment for us, we truly desire for our lives to reflect what You have said. Take away the feelings of enmity we may have towards

others, and mold us into the thoughtful, loving people that You intend us to be. To Your praise we pray. Amen.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3

John just tied loving the children of God in with loving God and keeping His commandments. He now takes that and further defines it, saying, “For this is the love of God.” In order to know we love the children of God, we will understand what it means to love God. John then explains that with the words, “that we keep His commandments.”

As has been consistently noted, this is not speaking of the precepts of the Law of Moses. That has already been defined in Scripture as a “yoke,” and as “bondage.” Speaking of the law, Peter says –

“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” Acts 15:10

Paul uses the same terminology in Galatians 5 –

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

These, and other such examples, show that the Law of Moses was a burdensome yoke, and it was a point of being brought into bondage. But it also served a good purpose by revealing these things, and also showing the world its need for Christ. Without the law, that would not have been rightly understood. Keeping Gods commandments involves keeping the words which point us to life in Christ, beginning with what Jesus says in John 6 –

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” John 6:29

From there, and being obedient to what God has commanded in Christ (and in proper context), and we will be demonstrating a love of God. John then reveals the nature of this by saying, “And His commandments are not burdensome.” The Greek word, translated as “burdensome,” is *barus*. This is the last of its six uses. It can be used in a positive sense or a negative one, but it generally signifies grievous, heavy, burdensome,

and so on. It is quite appropriate for how both Peter and Paul described the Law of Moses. The commandments of God in Christ, however, are not so.

Life application: John uses a definite article in front of the word “love.” In other words, “the love.” He’s speaking about the same unconditional and eternal love that he has been referring to throughout this epistle. It is grounded in our love for the Father, based on the work of Jesus.

The commandments of God in Christ are not burdensome. Rather, they stand in contrast to the commandments of man. His are a light and easy choice as we can see by His words in the gospel of Matthew –

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. ⁴ For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.” Matthew 23:1-4

& again...

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus’ yoke is light because He has already done the hard and heavy work for us. Now we can live in the joy of the Lord and demonstrate our love for God in the keeping of His commandments – as are revealed in the New Covenant.

We know, Lord, that Your commandments are not burdensome, but we also know that we often fail You. Be with us and help us to learn, live, and love the commandments which You have given us through Your New Covenant. May our lives be demonstrations of Your great love for us as we pass it on to others, and also return it to You as well. This we pray, so that our fellowship may be complete. Amen.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 1 John 5:4

In the previous verse, John wrote concerning the commandments of God. He now turns to the simple fact that those who have faith have kept the commandments of God. In this, he begins with, “For whatever is born of God.” It is a perfect participle – “having been born.” Whatever has been born is now in that state, and the state is that of completion. One is not born of God more than once, just as one is not born of a woman and then born a second or a third time.

Further, John uses a neuter adjective, whatever (literally, “all”), to indicate a full view of the matter he is conveying. As Cambridge notes of this, “...whereas the masculine would make the victorious *person* prominent, the neuter emphasizes rather the victorious *power*.” That power is defined at the end of the verse as “faith.” Before getting there, he continues the thought. That which is born of God “overcomes the world.” It is all-encompassing. Every single instance where one is born of God, the world is overcome.

The word translated as “overcomes” is an aorist participle. It should say, “having overcome,” or “overcame.” It is a once for all act at a specific point in time. One does not overcome the world in order to have to overcome it again and again. It is overcome and it is done. Any who are born of God have overcome the world. The reciprocal must also be true, if you have the overcome world, it is because you are born of God. John next describes how that comes about saying, “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

The word translated as “victory” is found only here in the Bible, it is *niké*. It is the means of success. It is “a particular expression of victory, resulting from receiving (obeying) the faith Christ imparts (i.e. His inworked persuasion)” (HELPS Word Studies).

John says that “our faith” is what brings about the victory, and that victory is what has made us overcome the world. Thus, our faith is what allows us to be begotten of God. It is exactly the same process that Paul conveys in his epistles.

In John 16, we read –

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33

Jesus obtained complete victory over the world. For those who have faith in Christ – meaning any and all – they join Him in His victory. The faith in Christ allows them to be born of God, and in their being born of God, they overcome.

Seven times in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus shows what overcoming the world because of faith in Him means –

“To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” Revelation 2:11

“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.” Revelation 2:17

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

²⁷ ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron;

They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ —

as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star.” Revelation 2:26-28

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:5

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.” Revelation 3:12

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:21

Only in one instance does Christ add anything to overcoming, when he said, “and keeps my works to the end.” That implies that not everyone who is saved (which is eternal) will be given this particular power and position. Thus, there is a special blessing to those

who not only are saved by Jesus, but who also keep his works. However, the overcoming itself is something which is eternal.

A study on the word “overcome” as it is laid out in the New Testament, gives a rich and full view of the marvel of life in Christ. However, Jesus sums up the thought with these words from Revelation 21:7 –

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”

It is faith in the finished work of Christ that allows this to occur.

Life application: NEWS FLASH: Deeds are not and cannot be a part of our salvation – either the declaration of salvation (being declared righteous and thus justified) or a continued necessity for our salvation.

For those who have been told they cannot ever truly know if they are saved, or for those who have been told they must “participate” in their salvation by doing things, or for those who have been told that their faith isn’t real unless they demonstrate the fruit of their salvation, then they have been misled.

Jesus Christ asks us to believe, and the apostles ask us to believe. The written testimony, which is the Word of God, asks us to believe. If we have faith in Jesus’ work, then we “overcome the world.” The term “whatever” indicates the victory of being reborn, not the strength of the person.

The engine of Jesus’ work is sufficient for anyone to overcome the world, but it won’t do so unless it has the fuel of our faith. No person is saved unless he has faith in what Jesus did, but glory to God in the highest, our faith in His work moves the mountains!

Lord God, we are so very glad that our salvation isn’t up to a denomination, a church, or our own effort. Instead, our salvation is entirely up to the work of Jesus Christ and our individual willingness to believe it is so. And we have that faith! We believe Jesus died for each of us, that He rose for us, and that faith in His work is all that we will ever need. Glory to God, it is sufficient, and it is finished!!! Amen.

Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:5

Look at how John weaves thoughts together to ensure all ends are secure –

“...whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” (5:4)

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” (5:1)

“He who believes the Jesus is the Son of God” overcomes the world. (5:5)

“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” (4:2)

“...every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. (4:3).

In this, John is obviously equating “Christ” with “Son of God.” The Christ is God incarnate (come in the flesh) – where the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9). John is once again revealing that which is true and that which is false. This calls out for proper understanding because to believe otherwise is the spirit of the Antichrist.

There are those who claim that Jesus is the Christ, but they do not believe He is God incarnate. Thus, verse 5:1 does not apply to them. There are those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but they do not accept that He is then fully God. Thus, verse 5:5 does not apply to them. In other words, there are sons of God recorded in both testaments – such as in Genesis 6 and Job 1. These are referring to human beings, not the divine Son of God.

There are also sons of God in the New Testament, such as in Romans 8:14 and elsewhere. These are adopted sons of God, not the Son begotten of God – meaning Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God.

One must take the words of John on a much more global scale to fully understand what he is referring to. Without doing so, a Mormon or a Jehovah’s Witness might appear to pass the test of one who overcomes the world. But such is not the case. Through evaluating the entire scope of what John is referring to, we find that such heretics do not pass muster, and have not overcome the world. As John asks, “Who is he who overcomes the world...?”

It is the person who will meet the qualifications he will now state, but that person must meet the other qualifications which are directly tied to his next words as well. John then

says that it is “he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” This is the person who overcomes. But he only does so if he believes that the Son of God (Jesus) is the Christ. And further, he only does so if he confesses that Jesus Christ has also come in the flesh.

If he does so, he is of God and has both been born of God and has overcome the world. If he does not confess the deity of Christ (having come in the flesh), he “is not of God.” In proper theology, one plus one will always equal two. However, sometimes the equation is built upon other such simple equations. When each is properly realized, the truth of the situation is confirmed. This is why it is so important to have a larger understanding of what John is conveying when talking with people from aberrant cults.

Also, in his words, John uses present participles, each prefixed with an article when speaking of the one who overcomes. More literally, he says, “Who now is the *one* overcoming.” The response is, “...the one believing.” As noted, one can believe in a “Christ” who is not the Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:4, for example). It is the one believing in the proper Christ, who is the Son of God. In his belief, he is overcoming the world. For those who believe in the wrong “Christ,” they are not overcoming anything. They are still in their sins, and they belong to this world.

Life application: John uses the term “overcome” six times in this letter alone, he uses it 11 times in the book of Revelation, and once in the Gospel of John, totaling 18 times – more than the rest of the Bible combined. This is the last time he uses the term in this letter, and he applies it directly to the belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

As He does so consistently in all of his writings, he brings in the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. To him, and therefore as a necessity to us, the idea of the God/Man is an area which is not debatable, and it is the defining line of the Christian faith. Either a person believes that Jesus is fully God, and also fully Man, or that person stands condemned and will be eternally separated from God. In other words, he has failed to “overcome the world.”

Because Jesus has overcome the world, we too can overcome the world. This is not something we can actively do, except in regard to faith. Rather, only Jesus was able to fulfill the law and to take upon Himself the sins of the world. And not only was He able to do so, but He accomplished His mission – defeating death and the ruler of this world, who is the devil. Because He did, our faith in Him is what allows us to overcome also. But our faith must be properly directed.

When we “call on Jesus as Lord” it must properly acknowledge who He is. Jesus is Lord because Jesus is fully God. Stand firm on this truth and you also will overcome the world.

Yes Jesus! You are our God and we bow our knees in submission to You. It is You who prevailed on our behalf and we wholeheartedly confess You as Lord – the Incarnate Word of God – to the glory of God the Father. Instruct us in the truths of Your word and guide us all our days so that we will be acceptable and faithful followers of You! Amen.

This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

1 John 5:6

John just spoke of the one who overcomes the world, noting that “he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” is such a person. He was referring to the fact that Jesus is fully God. But elsewhere, John has said, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2).

In that, John was not only referring to Christ’s deity (noting that He has “come in the flesh” and implying that He existed prior to that moment), but that He is also fully human because He took on flesh at the incarnation. The context of John’s words is important because they are needed to rightly discern what he will now refer to.

This verse, 1 John 5:6, is an especially difficult one and has been interpreted in several ways. John begins with, “This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ.” John shows that it is a factual, historical occurrence – Christ “came by water and blood.” This is surely a reference to Christ’s incarnation. As He said in John 3:13 –

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

Jesus spoke there of the incarnation, acknowledging that He is from heaven, and yet, He was obviously a man, physically present at that moment with Nicodemus. And so, the question is, what does John mean by saying that “He came by water and blood?” Four prominent options are –

- 1) The baptism and death of Jesus Christ;
- 2) The water and blood which came from His side when He was pierced on the cross;
- 3) Purification (washing) and redemption (through His sacrifice); and

4) Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The last two are spiritual/symbolic rather than literal and are unlikely because John says that He "came by water and blood." To spiritualize that wouldn't make sense. The second one is also unlikely because it reverses John's terminology of the "blood and water" at the cross – "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:34).

But more than merely reversing the terminology, the water and blood which came out from His side came after His earthly work of fulfilling the law. It reverses the thought of coming by water and blood, putting it at the end rather than the beginning of His incarnation.

Because of this, the first is the most likely of the traditional views, but even that makes no sense because Christ was "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23) when He began His ministry. Further, the death of Christ is, again, an event at the end of His ministry. To say He "came" by water and blood would place these events in an awkward format, indicating that His ministry from thirty years of age, until His crucifixion, was all that the gospels were concerned with. Such is not the case, even if it is the highlight of them.

Rather, a fifth – and much more likely – option would be that –

5) Jesus came by water (the water of the womb in which He came into humanity) and the blood (demonstrating His human life).

This is, in fact, what John has been speaking about – Jesus Christ came in the flesh. But He was not created in the flesh as Adam was. Rather He is the incarnate Son of God, but He is also fully human – having come through the birthing process and bearing the actual blood of humanity which was passed on through the genealogy of His ancestors.

The Old Testament states several times that "the life is in the blood," and it therefore makes an apt description of proof of humanity, particularly when Jesus' blood was what proved His death and our atonement. Hence, John says, "not only by water, but by water and blood." There are articles before both "water" and "blood." It more correctly reads, "not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood."

Christ wasn't created in Mary's womb. Rather, He was conceived of the Father and Mary. Thus, His blood would bear the Life of the Father, and the humanity of His mother. The spiritually dead state of all other humans was not seen in Him. Rather, the

spiritual connection to the Father existed, and it remained unsevered due to His perfect obedience in His life. This is why John next says, “And it is the Spirit who bears witness.”

It is generally assumed that this refers to the Holy Spirit. In the next verse, John will use the term “Holy Spirit,” thus defining it as such. The Spirit of God is the witness to the incarnation, and He is the witness to the perfection of life throughout Christ’s earthly walk. Unlike Adam who sinned, and whose spiritual connection to God was severed, Christ remained united to God due to His perfect obedience.

As is stated at the announcement of His coming –

“*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*” -Luke 1:35

Therefore, the evidence of his birth into the stream of humanity is treated in the conception and natal period signified by the water. His physical life, human characteristics, and His divine nature (sinlessness) are evidenced by His blood. And, His deity is also as evidenced by the work of the Holy Spirit as proclaimed in the gospel accounts. These things are true, and the Spirit testifies to them, assuring us that it is so “because the Spirit is truth.” Again, there is a missing article. It reads, “because the Spirit is the truth.”

That the Spirit is the truth is testified to by Jesus in John 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13. Nothing false is conveyed by the Spirit, and therefore there is nothing false in Christ Jesus because – as it reads in Luke 1:35, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”

Though this view is not one of the traditional views of scholars of the past, it is the view which corresponds to what John is speaking of throughout this epistle concerning the human/divine nature of Christ, how to discern the spirit of the Antichrist, and what is required for salvation of one who accepts the premise of what God has done in and through Jesus Christ. It further maintains the context of John’s thought of the previous verses, and of the verses to come.

Life application: The Bible is a book which presents many doctrines, but the main premise of the Bible is that God would send His Son into the world in order to redeem man. It would be a work of God alone, and it would be a work which testifies to the

truth that God loves His creatures enough to unite with His own creation in order to accomplish that redemption.

We are to accept – without equivocation – that Jesus Christ is fully man, and yet He is fully God. To deny either of these tenets is to deny God His rightful glory for what He has done. Further, it is an abuse of the very word which tells us of Jesus Christ. No person can be saved who denies the fundamental truth that Jesus Christ is the God/Man because they have denied the very word which speaks out this truth. To deny the word is to deny the truth of God who gave us His word.

Have faith in what God has done through Christ Jesus and be saved once and forever through His precious shed blood.

Heavenly Father, Your glorious word testifies to the Person of Jesus, coming in the flesh. He is both fully God and fully Man. He is the bridge between the infinite and the finite, between the Spirit and the flesh, between Your eternal being and our temporal being. Thank You for Jesus who has bridged the gap and restored us to You! Amen.

For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 1 John 5:7

This verse is known as the Johanne Comma (the “exception” of John) and is one of the most disputed verses in the Bible. Many translations leave out the part which says, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” Even if this part isn’t completely left out, it is often only footnoted to indicate its disputed nature. For a breakdown of what manuscripts include it, and which do not, one can refer to Joseph Benson’s (or several other commentators) commentary on the verse at this link: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_john/5-7.htm

Because it is included in many manuscripts, and because no theology is damaged because of its inclusion, it will be evaluated as if it is true and original.

John begins with, “For there are three that bear witness.” The words speak of a testimony or a record. They are a present participle – they are “bearing testimony,” and they do so “in heaven.” There is actually an article before “heaven.” Thus, it reads, “the heaven.” The importance of there being three is that of unity of testimony, and a confirmation of what is said.

The Law of Moses required the testimony of “two or three witnesses” for establishing a matter. Solomon speaks of “a threefold cord” which is not easily broken, signifying that there is strength in numbers. In Matthew 18, Jesus speaks of “two or three witnesses” as a confirmation of a matter. Paul repeats this in 2 Corinthians 13:1. Jesus also appeals directly to this type of thought in John 5 –

“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. ³² There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. ³³ You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. ³⁴ Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. ³⁶ But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. ³⁷ And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. ³⁸ But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.” John 5:31-38

Multiple witnesses form a principle of establishing firmness in a matter. EW Bullinger notes that the number three in Scripture “stands for that which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire*.” Therefore, it is right that such a witness be presented, even if it is found “in heaven.” These words are disputed as being in the original or not, but they form a contrast to the words “on earth” of the next verse in John’s letter. As John has presented numerous contrasts in this epistle, it is likely he would do so here as well.

John next continues with the words which are the most disputed, saying, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.” The three members of the Trinity are presented here, each being a separate witness to the Person and work of Jesus Christ, demonstrating a fulness within the Godhead. One argument against the reliability of this clause is presented by Albert Barnes, stating, “The ‘language’ is not such as John would use. He does, indeed, elsewhere use the term ‘Logos,’ or ‘Word’ – ὁ Λόγος *ho Logos*, John 1:1, John 1:14; 1 John 1:1, but it is never in this form, ‘The Father, and the Word;’ that is, the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Word’ are never used by him, or by any of the other sacred writers, as correlative.”

That is a fallacy known as an “argument from silence,” meaning it “is to express a conclusion that is based on the absence of statements in historical documents, rather than their presence” (Wikipedia definition). If that argument is used, much of the Bible

would have to be ignored as it is a book which constantly introduces new words and concepts which are never again used in its pages, even among individual writers.

John is making a theological point about the number of witnesses in heaven, and he therefore includes both the Father and the Word together. Stating “the Word,” rather than “the Son,” demonstrates the preexistence of the second member of the Trinity as based on his words both in his gospel and in his epistle, such as –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:1-3

John then finishes with, “and these three are one.” There is nothing surprising here. John was present when Jesus stated this in Matthew 28 –

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” Matthew 28:18, 19

In Jesus’ statement, the word “name” is in the singular. In other words, though the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three Persons, they are one essence. Therefore, John is again stating this truth. By using “Word” instead of “Son” John is actually confirming that Jesus is both the Son and the Word. He has always existed within the Godhead, and His union with humanity has not changed that status. He is the eternal Son of God, and He is the eternal word of God – dwelling in the single essence of the Godhead.

It should be noted that if the words, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” are removed, there is then a gender mismatch in the text. It would read –

“For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” (NASB)

The problem with this is that the words, “For there are three that testify,” are masculine. However, the words, “the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement,” are neuter. Because of this, the words, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one,” actually appear necessary for a correct reading because they are masculine.

Either way, the unity within the Godhead can be determined elsewhere, and the truth of the statement concerning each member being in heaven and capable of testifying which is found in this verse can be verified elsewhere as well. Therefore, claims of “heresy” towards those who hold to the shorter reading are not well-founded.

Life application: Despite it not being in many ancient manuscripts, the contents of this verse date back to the time of Cyprian who lived in the 3rd century and it survives in his treatise against heretics who denied the Trinity. Of this verse, John Calvin said, “However, the passage flows better when this clause is added, and as I see that it is found in the best and most approved copies, I am inclined to receive it as the true reading.”

The term “best and most approved” in regard to manuscripts are subjective, as may also be his point about the passage flowing better, but he chose to accept the words as a true part of John’s epistle. On the other side, those who dismiss the words here will use the same terminology – “best copies,” “best manuscripts,” and “best editions,” to deny the authenticity of the words.

In the end, God knows the truth of whether this verse belongs in the Bible or not, but one thing we can know is that the verse is truthful, regardless of its authenticity. Apart from this verse, the Bible teaches that the Father, the Word (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit are One (as noted above), therefore, nothing is damaged in one’s theology by accepting the words here as true and reliable.

In the end, we are asked to study in order to show ourselves approved when studying and examining Scripture. When something difficult, such as this verse, is presented, we are asked to carefully consider each side of the debate, pray about the matter, and be ready to defend why we accept one side or the other – while being charitable in our stand towards those who feel otherwise, if their argument is not based on faulty doctrine or heresy.

Thank You, O God, for the mysteries in Your word... things that challenge us to even stronger faith and things which ask us to diligently study matters rather than accepting

or dismissing their true intent without careful thought and contemplation. What a wonderful gift You have given us in the pages of Your reliable and trustworthy word, the Holy Bible! Amen.

And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. 1 John 5:8

As with the previous verse, there is argument over whether the first clause is genuine or not. Verses 7 and 8 taken together, and from the two varying views, will read –

“For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” (NASB)

“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.” (NKJV)

Going under the conservative assumption that the NKJV (et al) is correct, John begins this verse with, “And there are three that bear witness on earth.” There is actually an article before “earth.” Thus, it reads, “the earth.” Just as there are three that bear witness in “the heaven,” there are three that witness in “the earth.”

John is again using the precept concerning “two or three witnesses” to establish the truth of His claim. Though this is a precept found in the Law of Moses, it extends beyond that. As noted in the previous verse, Paul uses the precept in the New Covenant as well. Just as the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit witness in the heaven, so on the earth, there are “the Spirit, the water, and the blood.”

What John is referring to here is highly debated. First, unlike the previous verse which said “Holy Spirit,” this one only says, “Spirit.” Thus, if the previous words are not spurious, there could be a distinction between the two. Some say this is speaking of either the gospel, or of the gifts of the Spirit found among believers – the “manifestations of the Spirit.” However, because some texts do not include the “Holy Spirit” in the previous verse, it is claimed that this is referring to the Holy Spirit by some.

From there, “the water” is likewise debated over. Is it Christ’s baptism as some state? Others claim it is Christ’s untainted God-like purity. And “the blood” is claimed by some scholars to be referring to His crucifixion. Others state that it is speaking of the testimony Christ bore to the truth of the gospel.

The point of John's words is to testify to the truth of God in Christ. John has stressed the nature of Christ again and again. He has shown what the spirit of the Antichrist is – denying that Christ Jesus came in the flesh, meaning that He is fully Man and also fully God. He will continue to speak of the Father/Son relationship in the next verses. Therefore, it is highly unlikely this is referring to Christ's baptism and His crucifixion. These are things which occurred after His initial entrance into human existence.

Likewise, symbolically representing these things as gifts of the Spirit, or the purity of His life, take something concrete and turn it into something less so. John is referring to Spirit, water, and blood; and they should be considered in that light. These things testify in the earth, and they do so, as John says, in a way that "these three agree as one."

The Greek literally reads, as Vincent's Word Studies notes, "are for the one. They converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh." The previous verse showed that the heavenly witnesses are one. This verse states that the earthly witnesses are for the one. Both the heavenly witnesses and the earthly witnesses point to one reality. Jesus Christ is the Subject of the witness.

Understanding this, the Spirit, the water, and the blood are surely referring to what was presented and evaluated in the commentary of verse 5:6, which said, "This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood."

Jesus Christ came into humanity in the way that all humans come. He was conceived, and His conception and natal period is signified by the water. Therefore, He had real blood as any human does, and He came through the water of birth – just as any human being would. The "Spirit," then, would refer to the spirit which animates the human. This is why John focused on this aspect of Christ at the moment of His death, using the same phrase, *to pneuma*, or "the spirit," as he does here in this verse –

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." John 19:30

Just as the previous verse spoke of the deity of Christ, a verse which testifies of this "in the heaven," this verse testifies of the humanity of Christ "in the earth." John is not making up a new presentation to consider at all. He is building upon the same presentation that has been given since the first words of the epistle – Jesus Christ is the God/Man. In believing in Him – and in this fact alone concerning His nature – can a person be reconciled to God.

There would be no point if Jesus were only divine, and not truly human. God wouldn't need to present a "Jesus" at all. The infinite gap would remain. There would be no earthly witness of Him. If Jesus were only human, and not truly divine, then heaven could not bear witness to Him, and no atonement could be effected for man. Again, the infinite gap would remain. But Jesus Christ is both, and both the heaven and the earth testify to this fact.

Life application: In Deuteronomy 19:15 (and as is repeated elsewhere in both the Old and New Testaments) we read, "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."

John is making a legal case for the Person and work of Jesus, and he is thus refuting any Gnostic heresies which had already developed in his lifetime, and which continue today in various cults and sects. John states in the present tense that the three "bear witness." This means that they testify continuously to the facts that have been and are presented, and as are recorded in the word.

His words that "these three agree as one" are a united front against doctrinal heresy. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." What testifies to this fact? It is that which is recorded concerning Jesus Christ – the God/Man.

Because we have the testimony of these three, and because all matters are to be established by two or three witnesses, then Jesus has provided the infallible proof that He is the God/Man and that His work is the work of the Messiah. If doubts are arising in your mind concerning Jesus and His work, then simply look to the evidence provided. It has legal standing – and not in a mere human court, but in the eternal court of the Living God.

Lord, as doubts arise, we can see that all we need to do is return to Your word and search it for answers. You have not only left us with a testimony of Your work in the stream of humanity, but You have left us with an infallible one. What You have given us is more than reasonable – it is the very legal proof we need! Thank You for this gift, the Holy Bible. Amen.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. 1 John 5:9

John has noted that there are three that bear witness in heaven, and there are three that bear witness on the earth. These witnesses testify to the truth of Jesus Christ, and their Source is from God. Because of this, John puts forth a proposition to consider. He says, “If we receive the witness of men.” The verb is in the indicative mood. Thus, it assumes that the proposition is a fact. It is something we do constantly.

We receive the witness of men in news, we do so in our courts of law, we do so in things we are not specialists in – trusting that someone else has the information that will keep us safe, financially secure, and so on. We also receive the witness of family members. Very little would get done in this world if we did not receive the witness of other men. If we go to a stockbroker with our life savings, we are entrusting that to the witness of a man. “This is my very life, please look after it.” As this is so, John puts forth the second half of his proposition, “the witness of God is greater.”

Understanding the nature of God, we can know – even apart from the words of Scripture – that God cannot lie. God cannot err. God is perfect in all His ways. These things can be known through a process of simple logic being thought through to its inevitable conclusion. However, we cannot know this about men. Man may be lying – be it in a court of law, be it about the safety of the bridge we want to cross, or be it even about our life savings. And yet, we still receive the witness of men.

As this is so, and it is undeniable that it is the case, then we should all the more willingly receive the testimony of God. God’s testimony is not only surer than that of men, it is infinitely more so. The author of Hebrews states this truth to us –

“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” Hebrews 6:17, 18

As God cannot lie, the only consideration that we must take into account is, “Are we dealing with the true God?” There are various religions in the world, all of which claim to be rooted in the truth of God. But they cannot all be so. Their paths to pursuing God, meaning whatever supposed source of inspiration is used, contradict one another. But there is no contradiction in God. Therefore, if God has actually revealed Himself in some way, we should be able to discern it.

There is no doubt that God has revealed Himself in Scripture. It displays wisdom, it accurately reflects the state of man and the state of the world, it prophetically confirms

itself again and again, it reveals God in the way that logic can deduce He must be revealed, and so on. With this sure witness, and because that witness is of God, it is “far greater” than that coming from men.

Because of this, John then says, “for this is the witness of God.” This is referring to the three-fold witness in heaven and of the three-fold witness on earth. These combine to become the “witness of God.” Both of these combine into one thought – that God has united with human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. This is evidenced by the spirit, the water, and the blood. It is in this form whereby “He has testified of His Son.”

The Man came, He lived among men, He gave His life up for them, and He rose again on the third day. And these facts are testified to by men –

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

The apostles (which include John) witnessed and testified to this truth. Five hundred also saw and testified to it. And the word, which comes from God (is inspired by the Spirit of God), has recorded this truth, also testifying to it. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. There is no reason at all to disbelieve. Heaven and earth bear witness, man has borne witness, and God – who cannot lie – has borne witness. The God/Man – Jesus Christ – has come.

Life application: In this verse, John presents an *a fortiori* argument – from the lesser to the greater. The law mandates that there be two or three witnesses in order to establish a true testimony. If we are willing to receive human witnesses in such circumstances, how much more God! Humans are fallible and often make faulty judgments. They also are prone to telling lies, even in testimony which is under oath. This is the reason for obtaining more than one witness. However, even this method of validation is subject to abuse.

In 1 Kings 21, we read the account of a man named Naboth who owned a choice piece of land which the King of Israel – Ahab – wanted for himself. Naboth refused to sell it, so

false witnesses were obtained in order to convict him of something he didn't do. The result is recorded for our learning –

“And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died.” 1 Kings 21:13

Here we are, accepting fallible and even falsified human testimony to establish matters of importance. How much more should we then accept the witness of God! The Father verbally acknowledged His Son at His baptism and on the mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 3:17 & 17:5); the Word testifies in the Son through human activity (John 5:39); and the Holy Spirit continues to testify to the work of Jesus even now (John 15:26).

Let us trust the word of God, stand firm on its precepts, and search for Jesus Christ in its pages – knowing that God has given it to us for our understanding, doctrine, and even for our very life.

Surely we have the infallible proof and witness of the work of Jesus Christ – all accomplished on our behalf! And all You ask us to do, O God, is to receive it... receive it by faith. And so, we acknowledge in faith that Jesus is Lord. We will forever continue to acknowledge His strong and guiding hand in our lives. Hallelujah and Amen – we receive Jesus. Amen.

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. 1 John 5:10

John now builds on his words of the previous verse. He begins with, “He who believes in the Son of God.” However, the translation is faulty. The Greek uses the preposition *eis*, rather than *en* – “on” rather than “in.” This is the first time he has used it this way in 1 John. However, he uses it almost forty times in the Gospel of John.

It is a stronger and more sure belief that doesn't merely believe in the existence of a thing or person, but instead has a confidence in every aspect of that thing or person. When hiking, one may believe in his friend to help if trouble arises, but that may not be the same as believing on the brother to help. “I know that he is willing to help, but I am

not sure if he is capable of helping.” Trusting on the Son of God is placing a full trust on every aspect of the Son of God.

Further, the verb “believes” is a present participle. It is an ongoing belief in the Son of God. With this belief in the Son of God, John says such a person “has the witness in himself.

For clarity, some translations add in the words “of God” here – “has the witness of God in himself.” This is correct. John just said in the previous verse –

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.”

It is this “witness of God” that John is referring to, and it is greater than the witness of men. The contrast is given so that a person can have the confidence that his witness (of God) is rightly placed. He has rightly believed in the truth of God because he has believed in the Son of God. Again, as John has consistently done throughout the epistle, He is focusing most specifically on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. If one believes in this precept, he has this sure witness of God. However, “he who does not believe God has made Him a liar.”

John has taken “the witness of God,” and he has now turned it into a personal aspect of God. To believe in the testimony which God gives is to believe Him. The two are spoken of as one reality. The acceptance of the message of God is to accept God as He has revealed Himself. And in this, there is a new reality for the believer –

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” -John 1:12-13

It is belief in the Son that, in turn, demonstrates a person possesses the witness of God. And to possess that witness is to become a child of God. However, John – though making this clause a personal note concerning God – wrote it in the negative. He said, “he who does not believe God.” Such a person “has made Him a liar.”

This goes back to verse 2:4 –

“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” -1 John 2:4

As seen then, keeping the commandments of God is to believe on the One whom He has sent. That was evidenced in Jesus' words from John 6 –

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’” -John 6:29

To believe in the Son is to believe God who sent the Son. To not believe in the Son is to not believe God, and it is the mark of a liar. This is “because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.”

The verb form of the previous clause (in 1 John 5:10) which said, “has made,” and the verb form of the words, “has not believed,” here are both in the perfect tense. The past non-belief continues into the present in the one who does not believe. The person was a liar, and he continues to be a liar because of his failure to accept the witness of God found in the Son.

Vincent's Word Studies highlights the Greek here. Rather than “believed the testimony,” the Greek more specifically says, “believed on the testimony.” The object is not directly personal – “testimony.” But it is indirectly personal because the testimony is that which speaks of Christ Jesus. God has tied who He is into who the Son of God is. The two are united in one thought. To have the Son is to have the Father. To not have one is to have neither.

Life application: John sums up the objective evidence of the preceding verses in this concise and precise thought. The objective witnesses are:

- 1) That He who came by water and blood.
- 2) The testimony of the Spirit.
- 3) The witness of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (which are one).
- 4) The Spirit, the water, and the blood (which are in agreement as one).
- 5) The witness of God – meaning the entire Godhead mentioned in item 3.

These evidences now ask each person who hears to act upon their testimony and their witness, and either accept or reject them at face value. He who “believes in” (or rather “on”) is speaking of trust on the Person who is the Son of God. If a person has this ongoing trust, he also has the “witness in himself.” This isn't speaking of initial salvation, but it is indicating that the individual has become an objective witness to the surety of the proclamation.

John then says that any person who “does not believe” – here he leaves off “in” to indicate that it is not speaking of the work of God, but rather the truthfulness of God – “has made Him a liar.” If these evidences, all of which point to both the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ, are not believed, then the man has called God a liar. There is, and there can be, no salvation for a person who denies this fundamental truth. He must repent of this (change his mind about the Son) and believe on the Son of God as the Bible reveals Him.

If you have denied either the humanity or the deity of God, you have called God a liar. Go back, research the testimony which has been given, and accept God as truthful. Believe and be saved!

Jesus, we believe with all of our hearts and souls that You are fully God and also fully Man. We believe You are the infinite united to the finite – the God/Man – who has come so that we can know and understand the depth of the love of God which was hidden in ages past. Glory to You our Lord. And thank You, O God, for revealing Yourself to us in the Person of Jesus! Amen.

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 1 John 5:11

John now uses the word translated as, *marturia*, for the sixth and final time in his epistle. All have been in verses 5:9-11. It is variously translated as “witness,” “testimony,” etc., but it is referring to the same thing, even if translators translate it differently in these verses. Simply translating all six uses as “testimony” would give the right sense to the reader. Concerning this, John begins this verse with, “And this is the testimony:”

It is the testimony which is greater than that of the testimony of man. (5:9)

It is the testimony which God has testified of His Son. (5:9)

It is the testimony one has in himself when he believes in the Son. (5:10)

It is the testimony of God which proves one a liar when he does not accept it. (5:10)

It is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (5:11)

As stated in the last statement, John defines this testimony as concerning the fact “that God Has given us eternal life.” It is an aorist verb, meaning He gave it one time for all time. However, two views are considered. The first is that this is speaking of eternal life

being offered to the world, once for all, in the giving of His Son. It is a true statement, but is that the full intent of John's words? The second is that God gave each person who believes in His Son eternal life, once for all-time.

What seems more probable is that it is the latter of the two. This is because the word "us" is the object – God gave to us. It is a historical fact that God gave Jesus once for all time. It is offered to all, but it only applies to believers and not to non-believers. That would be supported by 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 everlasting life.”

The same phrase, *zōēn aiōnion*, or “eternal life” (without any article), is used in both. It is true that God gave His Son in His love for the world, but it is also true that only “whoever believes” in the Son will be given eternal life. That is because, as John next says, “and this life is in His Son.”

It cannot be argued that God has given His Son to nonbelievers resulting in eternal life. It can only be argued that He has given His Son for this purpose – whether it is ever realized in them or not. It is in Christ that the life is found. Without coming to Christ, one cannot say that, “The Bible says God has given me eternal life because of Jesus,” except in an anticipatory way. Until a person believes in the offer, it remains unappropriated by the person.

As Matthew Poole says, “His testimony, that this is his Son and the Christ, imports so much, that eternal life is in him, as the source and fountain of it; so that he gives it to us in no other way than in and by him.”

Once it is found in Him by a person (through faith), the eternal life has been given. It is done – once for all time. The same thought is generally found in 1 John 3:1 –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

The love of the Father is a fact that is based on being children of God. Eternal life is a fact because we have received the Son.

Life application: “And this is the testimony” is speaking of the internal witness of the previous verse – “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.” As

noted, the same word is used in the Greek in both instances which ensures us that “the testimony” is understood in this context. In other words, “He who believes in the Son of God has witness in himself...that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” This construct of this verse is another witness to the doctrine of eternal salvation. The tense of the word “given” when united with the term “eternal life” indicates something that has been granted to us right now. In other words, we don’t need to anticipate an existence which goes on forever. Instead, it is already in our grasp and it has been given by God who cannot lie. The eternal life, which is in His Son, Jesus, is ours to enjoy from the moment we have the witness of Christ in ourselves.

As we walk through our day, failing in our Christian walk, we should be astounded at our eternal state and ever grateful that it was a gift given even when God knew we would continue to err. But, because of Jesus, God is pleased to grant that which is beyond us. This also should help us to reflect on those around us who are lost. As God has given life in His Son, then it must be true that there is no life without His Son. God doesn’t simply grant life to anyone for any reason. Rather, as sons of Adam, we are already separated from Him, and He is under no obligation to redeem us.

However, when He sent Jesus, He opened up an avenue by which restoration is offered, granted, and sealed. This path maintains His holiness and yet satisfies His righteousness. In other words, it is the surest deal in the universe. When the offer is accepted, complete and free access to eternal life is guaranteed.

O God, our God! Thank You for the sure witness we have because of Jesus Your Son. Even when we fall short and fail You, we have no fear that the pardon we received will ever be revoked. With all confidence, we can stand up, brush ourselves off, and continue in Your good grace – all because of the work of Jesus our Lord! Amen.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1 John 5:12

There is an article in front of both instances of “life.” A literal translation would be –

“he who is having the Son, hath the life; he who is not having the Son of God — the life he hath not.” YLT

This version will be used to analyze John’s words.

The words, “the life,” are speaking of the life given by God just referred to in the previous verse where John says, “that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” It is this eternal life which he is now speaking of. Understanding this, he begins with, “He who is having the Son, hath the life.”

It is all-encompassing. Anyone who has the Son has eternal life. This is appropriated in only one way – belief. But, as has been seen in John’s words, it is proper belief. John’s epistle has focused on the fact that the Son of God is deity, and that He has come in the flesh – meaning He is the God/Man. If one believes in a Jesus who is God but not man, he does not have the Son. If one believes in a Jesus who is man but not God, he does not have the Son. In either instance, he also does not have the life. Misdirected faith is, after all, wasted faith.

With this understood, John next says, “he who is not having the Son of God.” Notice how John has added “of God” to this second clause. Those who have the Son understand that He is of God. There is clarity in their thinking, and they have rightly called on Jesus. He came in the flesh; He is God incarnate. But in the second clause, John is more specific when he speaks of those who do not have the Son of God.

A person who denies the deity of Christ might say, “I believe in Jesus, the Son of God.” They have to say this because the Bible calls Him the Son of God again and again. But how is He the Son of God? Was He created and then adopted? Was it a title conferred on Him without any true family relationship? Or, is He truly the Incarnate Word of God? Anything but the final option means that he does not have the Son of God as is spoken of in the Bible. If this is the case, John says that “the life he hath not.”

In the first clause, the emphasis was on “hath.” If one is having the Son, he HATH the life. It is a certainty. However, in the second clause, the emphasis is on “life.” One who is not having the Son of God, THE LIFE he does not have. He has no connection to God, because he does not have the Son, in whom is THE LIFE.

The tragedy of John’s words is found in the simple notion of either:

- 1) Never being told about the Son of God,
- 2) Rejecting the Son of God, or
- 3) Believing in Jesus as the Son of God incorrectly – by failing to acknowledge the incarnation.

In any of these, the person does not have the Son. In not having the Son, he does not have the life which is found in the Son of God. He remains dead in his sins and forever separated from God.

Life application: God is the source of life. An absolute truth concerning God is that He is the One who alone is Necessary; the One who cannot not exist. Everything and everyone else is contingent on God for its being – both initial being and continued existence. God is the Source of all life. He is therefore pure existence. In John Chapter 1, we read these words –

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12, 13

Being “born of God” then means to have the same life which is in God – a life which is eternal. John expands on this here when he says, “He who has the Son has life.” In this case, he is using the term synonymously with a personal relationship and acceptance of the work of the Lord Jesus. This is what we know of as being “born again.”

When we call on Jesus, we are no longer merely flesh which perishes, but we are born of God, from above. This is the gift of life which issues from God through the Son. John then turns his sights on those who do “not have the Son of God.”

Anyone who does not have the Son does not have life. Only a fool, a deceiver, or an imbecile could come to any other conclusion than this is what John is saying. God leaves the choice up to us – accept His offer of peace through Jesus Christ the Lord, or be eternally separated from Him. There is no other option, and to say differently is to call God a liar, state His word is in error, and/or to claim the Son is not who He is presented as in Scripture. The choice is up to each of us – may you make the right one.

Lord God, You have given us the choice – life or death, light or darkness, heaven or hell. As incredible as it seems, You have allowed us to choose. May we be faithful to make the proclamation which glorifies You, by saying, “Truly this is the Son of God!” All hail the great and exalted name of Jesus! Amen.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. 1 John 5:13

John's words of the last two verses were:

- 1) concerning the testimony of God – that He has given us eternal life, and that eternal life is found in His Son, and then
- 2) He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

John has been methodical in how he has presented his words in this epistle, leading up to those two final points. Now, he begins to close the epistle by saying, "These things I have written to you." The Greek is in the aorist tense. It is referring to the contents of the letter up to this point. John's words have been directed "to you who believe in the name of the Son of God." The words here look back on how John opened his gospel –

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12, 13

In both John 1 and this verse, it more rightly states, "believe on the name." To believe on a name signifies to believe on all that the name represents. In other words, the name stands for the person. Therefore, to believe on the name doesn't merely include trusting the person – "I believe in my friend's ability to get me out of this difficulty," but to believe in all that he is. "I believe on my friend John. His name identifies to me a person who is trustworthy, capable, honest, willing to help, and so on." This is what John is conveying. The name of the Son of God bears all the weight, authority, ability, characteristics, and so on of the Son of God. In believing on His name, John then says, "that you may know that you have eternal life."

John uses the word *eidó*, meaning to mentally grasp a truth. The two thoughts are completely connected. To believe on the name is to then know – with one hundred percent certainty – that you have eternal life. There should be no doubt in one's mind that he has passed from death to life. As far as the words, "you have eternal life," they are rather oddly arranged. The Greek reads, "life you have, eternal."

Translations vary on how to properly render this. The Weymouth Version renders it, "you already have the Life of the Ages." It is a unique way of setting the thought off to catch the reader's attention.

John finishes the thought with, "and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God." John's words here cannot be taken as a statement reflecting a

conditional salvation – as if someone fails to continue believing in the name of the Son of God, they aren't really saved. He has already said that the person who believes has eternal life. What John is conveying with these words is that a person will have surety, and he will continue to have that surety. A good comparison to this thought comes from Paul –

“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Ephesians 4:12-14

Paul shows that people can be carried away from what is sound. In 2 Peter 1, Peter writes about the person who “has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:9). This is the same type of thought being conveyed by John. He is telling his reader that belief on the name saves, and it saves forever. His words implore his reader to understand this, and to continue to understand it. It is not a point of losing salvation, but of losing the joy which is found in the salvation.

Life application: John's words have two main thoughts –

- That you may know you have eternal life, and
- That you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

He has done this for the benefit of his readers – those “who believe in the name of the Son of God.” He wants those who already believe to be grounded in their faith and established in their doctrine so that nothing will draw them away from the truth of the message. Coming up in his second letter, he will go so far as to state this –

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”
2 John -10, 11

Jesus is the key to eternal life, and apart from Him it is a concept without realization. John's letter has specifically addressed Jesus' nature, namely that He is the Son of God. Tied in with this is his directive that only by faith in this fact is salvation realized.

Those who deny the deity of Christ deny He is the literal Son of God. Those who deny the humanity of Christ deny the very work God accomplished to bridge the gap between

us. These are such important tenets that John tells us not to even greet someone who denies these fundamental truths.

For those who are saved, they are saved forever. But they can forget this fact. God does not want you to, and so He inspired John to convey his words to us that we should continue to believe on the Name which is above every name – JESUS!

Stand fast in your theology and never let the devil get a foothold into your doctrine.

O God, keep us away from those who would attempt to diminish the truth of who Jesus is and the work He came to accomplish. Keep us steadfast in our devotion to Him, and to the purity of His nature and His deeds, so that our doctrine may be acceptable to You. Thank You for the gift of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

John has just written about the surety of eternal life, and of the continuance of belief “in the name of the Son of God.” Based on that, he next says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him.” The word translated as “confidence” speaks of boldness. This is the fourth and last time it is used in the epistle, and it is its last use in Scripture as well. It refers to something spoken openly, and plainly. Further, the words “in Him” are more appropriately translated as “toward Him.” Thus, it reads, “Now this is the boldness that we have toward Him.”

We have been granted eternal life because we believe in the name of Christ who is the Son of God. In this close and personal relationship, we are granted a nearness to God that allows us to be bold in our petitions made toward Him. This same thought is made in the book of Hebrews, where the author says –

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

We may come boldly to the throne of grace, and we may have boldness toward Him there so, “that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

This is the same general thought, using the same word, that was stated in 1 John 3:21 –

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.”

Our confidence is a set marker of our position in Christ. It is not an arrogant position where we can claim things because we believe the world revolves around us. Nor is it a carte blanche ticket to ask anything of God because we are in Christ. Rather, the state is one of unfettered access to God because of Christ, allowing us to petition Him for what we desire. But it must be, as John states, “according to His will.”

This is the great limitation that is set upon us when asking of God. And it is one which is mentally overlooked by people when they desire something of Him. We may ask for health, but that may not be according to His will. We may have an affliction that we desire to be removed, but that may not be according to His will. Paul discovered this concerning his thorn in the flesh. He petitioned the Lord three times, but the Lord’s divine response was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Our job is to lay our petitions which are not contradictory to the nature of God before Him and then to wait. If our petition is not something unbiblical, and if it is also according to His will, He will hear us, and we can expect a positive response. If our request is not appropriate, He will not hear us, and it will not be granted. Or, if it is an otherwise appropriate request, but it is not according to His will, He will hear us, but it will not be granted.

Life application: John’s words here and in the next verse are often taken to inappropriate extremes. The words are read, the parts which don’t fit our desires are overlooked, and expectations arise which are not in accord with God’s will. A couple other verses which are taken in this way are –

“If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.” John 14:14

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” Matthew 18:19

John 14:14 was spoken directly to His personal disciples and is to be taken in that context. It is not a verse to make claims over Jesus by us. Matthew 18:19 is a verse that is speaking about discipline and agreement on those disciplinary matters, not about any other issues that we desire to petition God about.

John’s words in 1 John 5:14 are conditional based on the word “if.” God will hear and God will respond when our petitions are in accordance with His will. This, however, makes our requests subject to Him, not in authority over Him.

We cannot get a group of people together, make a claim that we will receive a new church van or new flooring for the sanctuary, and expect it to happen.

Everything must be taken in the proper context, and then, when it is, it must be subservient to God's will. It is the epitome of arrogance to make a claim in Jesus' name for anything unless it is directly in line with the outlines of the Bible and in accordance with His will. Be content that God has a good plan for us and that He knows both what we want and even more – what we need. Let us be content with that!

Lord, help us to move away from the destructive prosperity gospel, which is no gospel at all. May we be thankful for what You provide. And what You withhold, may we understand that it was a desire and not a need, or maybe that it is simply not in Your will to give us that thing. All things from You are in accordance with Your will for us, and so help us to receive them as such. Amen.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

John has just written about the surety of eternal life, and of the continuance of belief “in the name of the Son of God.” Based on that, he next says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him.” The word translated as “confidence” speaks of boldness. This is the fourth and last time it is used in the epistle, and it is its last use in Scripture as well. It refers to something spoken openly, and plainly. Further, the words “in Him” are more appropriately translated as “toward Him.” Thus, it reads, “Now this is the boldness that we have toward Him.”

We have been granted eternal life because we believe in the name of Christ who is the Son of God. In this close and personal relationship, we are granted a nearness to God that allows us to be bold in our petitions made toward Him. This same thought is made in the book of Hebrews, where the author says –

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

We may come boldly to the throne of grace, and we may have boldness toward Him there so, “that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

This is the same general thought, using the same word, that was stated in 1 John 3:21 –

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.”

Our confidence is a set marker of our position in Christ. It is not an arrogant position where we can claim things because we believe the world revolves around us. Nor is it a carte blanche ticket to ask anything of God because we are in Christ. Rather, the state is one of unfettered access to God because of Christ, allowing us to petition Him for what we desire. But it must be, as John states, “according to His will.”

This is the great limitation that is set upon us when asking of God. And it is one which is mentally overlooked by people when they desire something of Him. We may ask for health, but that may not be according to His will. We may have an affliction that we desire to be removed, but that may not be according to His will. Paul discovered this concerning his thorn in the flesh. He petitioned the Lord three times, but the Lord’s divine response was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

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If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. 1 John 5:16

John now presents a supposition concerning a brother in Christ and the remedial action for what is proposed. He begins with, "If anyone." It is speaking of any believer in Christ. Should a believer fall into this category, John has words of instruction to follow. This instruction is that if any believer "sees his brother sinning a sin." The verb is a present participle. The person is actively engaged in committing sin.

John next describes that sin as one "*which does not lead* to death." The Greek is more strictly stated, "not unto death." The person is sinning a sin that will not result in his death. What does that mean? It is not speaking of something that could lead to spiritual death and separation from God. This is certain because Paul has already instructed the church on this matter. In 2 Corinthians 5, he said –

"Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ 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 Corinthians 5:18, 19

In Christ, God is no longer imputing sin to a person. What this means is that a believer may commit sin, but it is not recognized as such. This is evident for two reasons from the hand of John. First, John speaks of a brother "sinning a sin." Therefore, believers can commit acts which are sinful. Secondly, however, John will say in just two verses "that

whoever is born of God does not sin.” He is referring to what Paul says in 2 Corinthians. In God’s eyes, even if sin is committed, it is no longer imputed.

What John is then speaking of now is an act of unrighteousness being committed by a believing brother that could lead to his physical death, not his spiritual death and a resulting return to separation from God. The salvation is secured and can never be lost, but a loss of life in the act of sinning can occur. In such a case, the person seeing the sin is given instruction. John says, “he will ask.”

In this, the verb is in the future tense. As Vincent’s Word studies notes of this, it “expresses not merely permission (it shall be permitted him to ask), but the certainty that, as a Christian brother, he will ask. An injunction to that effect is implied.” It is the believer’s responsibility to pray for other believers who are found to be “sinning a sin” which does not lead to death. In this, a promise is made, saying, “and He will give him life.”

Who the “he” is referring to is not completely discernible from the Greek. The NKJV capitalizes it, signifying they believe it is God. However, it could be referring to the petitioner. His actions through prayer are what lead to life (see James 5:20). Either is possible, but the more likely rendering is that it is God who is being referred to.

John again stresses the fact that this injunction is “for those who commit sin not *leading* to death.” In this, John has gone from the third person singular to the third person plural – from “him” to “them.” He has now made the proposition a general statement. In other words, anytime such an event occurs, the believer is to pray for a person whose sin does not lead to death. Therefore, all believers are to pray for their brothers who fall into this category. It is an expected part of the conduct of those in the church.

John then turns to the exception stating, “There is sin *leading* to death.” It is rightly translated. Some versions say, “There is a sin leading to death.” This is incorrect. It is not speaking of only one sin that could lead to death. Rather, it is a general proposition concerning any sin that leads to death. If a believer is sinning a sin that leads to death, John says, “I do not say that he should pray about that.”

The words, “a sin that leads to death,” are the most difficult of the words of this verse, and there are various views on what is meant. The words of the final clause give insights into it. First, the words of the Greek Old Testament in Numbers 18:22 speak of incurring

a death-bearing sin. It is a sin that leads to death. In a translation from the Hebrew, that verse says –

“Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die.” Numbers 18:22

The idea here is one of physical death caused by one’s disobedient action in relation to the holy things of God. In overstepping their position within Israel by violating those holy duties, they would incur guilt and die. Paul speaks of this type of thing in the New Testament –

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” 1 Corinthians 11:28-30

The believers at Corinth had committed sin which leads to death. This is perfectly evident from the context of Paul’s words. They had partaken of the holy things in an unworthy manner, and they had gotten sick and/or died. This was a “sin leading to death.”

This can also be referring to an ongoing and habitual sin. In 1 Corinthians 5, there is the account of someone committing an immensely degrading sin. Paul said to hand that man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (sin which will lead to death if not terminated) so that his soul may be saved on the day when Jesus visits us. Such a sin leads to death. Therefore, any sin which will result in death is included.

John says, “I do not say that he should pray about that.” He does not say we cannot pray about that, but that it is not to be expected or anticipated.

In such a case, when a believer – knowing that his actions are unholy – continues in that unholy manner, he then brings discredit upon the holy things of the Lord. Rather than prayer, he needs instruction and to be called out for his actions. If he continues in his inappropriate behavior, why would anyone pray for that?

Again, this is not – as so many scholars attempt to define it – speaking of a loss of salvation. It cannot be, because believers are no longer being imputed sin. As noted, John will confirm that in just two verses. This is referring to the physical death of a believer for sin which leads to that physical death.

Life application: If you treat the holy things of the Lord improperly, Paul indicates that you may actually die from that conduct. If you sleep around, maybe you will get AIDS or get shot by someone's husband. If you drink heavily, your liver is going to go, and your life will end. If you rob a bank to feed your family, the security officer may send you off to the check-out counter of life.

As you can see, sin leading to death is obviously something that brings discredit upon the name of Jesus who saved you in the first place. John says that we don't necessarily need to pray about this type of thing. In such cases, our fellow Christians have made their own beds and are now destined to lie in them. Choices like this bear the due penalty they deserve. Prayer for them is not necessary or expected.

Lord Jesus, each of us has sinned since we came to You. We also see fellow Christians doing the same. In times when this sin isn't active and with a high hand, give us the sense to pray about it for restoration. When the sin is an active affront to You and Your honor, may You judge according to Your wisdom and bring about whatever will lead to the most glory for You. Amen.

All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death. 1 John 5:17

In the previous verse, John spoke of sin leading to death, and of sin not leading to death. He now notes that "All unrighteousness is sin." It is a general proposition similar to what he said in 1 John 3:4 –

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."

Despite what he noted about sin that does not lead to death, John is emphatic that all unrighteousness is sin. The difference is that some sins lead to death and some don't, but all are an offense to God and cause a rift between us and Him.

John has included this statement to show that those sins which do not lead to death are still in the same category as those that do. We cannot point our fingers at another believer (John is speaking to and about believers, as was noted in the previous verse) and say, "Your sin is greater than my sin." All unrighteousness is, in fact, sin. The difference in the outcome of committing one sin or another does not change the fact that a state of unrighteousness exists. He notes this because "there is sin not *leading* to death."

The statement is obvious, but it was necessary to repeat. Just because people commit unrighteous acts (sin), it does not mean that they will die because of it. A believer may get drunk. It is unrighteousness (Ephesians 5:18). However, it will not necessarily lead to death. On the other hand, a believer may be an alcoholic and – unless he leaves that lifestyle – it will lead to his death. But what John emphasizes is that the one who got drunk has committed unrighteousness, just as the alcoholic commits unrighteousness.

Having noted this, and understanding the ultimate consequences of sin, as well as the redemption from the state of sin (because we are familiar with Paul's letters which have been placed prior to John's epistle), John has tremendously good news to repeat to those of us who – with all certainty – commit acts of unrighteousness, and thus commit acts of sin. He will lay out that good news in the next verse.

Life application: When we sin – whether it is sin that could lead to death or not – we are to confess it as such. To act high-handedly against God because of unrepentant sin is an act of defiance and demonstrates that we really don't appreciate the position we are in (meaning in Christ).

Jesus did more for us at the cross of Calvary than we will ever be able to imagine. The divide between us and God was infinite in its scope. Thus, there was the need for Him to unite with human flesh in order to bridge that gap. Jesus is the finite united with the infinite. In the capacity of His finite humanity, He fulfilled the law which we could never meet. Then He gave His life up in exchange for ours (in which were already condemned as is noted in John 3:18).

God accepted this as a perfectly just exchange – the law was satisfied by Jesus on our behalf. Our salvation places us in Christ, and therefore we are sinless in Him on a positional basis. When God sees us, He is looking at us through the filtering lens of Jesus. Because of this, we can never be condemned again, but this in no way excuses us sinning intentionally or sinning and not confessing it as sin.

When we do these things, we lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and we also harm the fellowship with God that we should be enjoying now. How can the Holy Spirit fill us when we are disobedient to Him? He cannot. So, let us attempt to keep from sin, confess sin when it occurs, and pray for others when they sin. All of this is pleasing to God and keeps us in a right relationship with Him.

As always Lord, when we contemplate the great work You wrought on our behalf, it makes our sin seem so utterly vile. Because of this, may we never look at it any other

way. Instead, may we see our sin for what it is – rebellion against You and unrighteousness that needs to be dealt with. We love You, Lord, and we desire to be obedient to You always. Amen.

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. 1 John 5:18

John has been speaking of sins which lead to death, and those that do not. In his words, he was addressing such sins in believers – “If anyone sees his brother sinning.” He now turns to something that, on the surface, seems contradictory. He begins the thought with, “We know.” This is the first of three “We know” statements in a row, and which are presented just before the epistle ends.

This first one says, “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin.” The verb translated here as “is born” is a perfect participle. More literally, it says, “having been born.” It was something that occurred and the matter is settled. The person is born of God, and that is that. It is a surety, and it is reflected in what John said in Chapter 3 –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:1, 2

To be born of God is to be a child of God. It contains the guarantee, promise, and surety that “we shall be like Him,” meaning like Jesus Christ. Deal done. John says of such a person that he “does not sin.” The verb is present tense. Right now, at this moment, and at each moment that follows, he does not sin. How can that be when he has just said, “If anyone sees his brother sinning”?

The answer comes from what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ 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.”

There is the committing of sin, and there is the imputation of guilt for sin. The two are completely separate concepts.

Citing the psalms, and referring to a reality which is now realized in Christ, Paul says in Romans 4:7, 8 –

“Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;
⁸ Blessed *is the* man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

Speaking of the position of a believer in Christ (meaning having died with Christ) and the benefit of that position, Paul says in Romans 6:7 –

“For he who has died has been freed from sin.”

And again, in Romans 6:18, Paul mirrors John’s words here and says believers have “been set free from sin.”

But Paul acknowledges that believers do, in fact, sin. For example, in 1 Corinthians 8:12, he says that we can sin against our brother and thus sin against Christ. Therefore, what Paul and John are both speaking of is the imputation of sin. We still do things which would otherwise be considered sin, but we are not imputed sin because we are “born of God.”

It is a note of eternal salvation all by itself. If we are born of God, and if we are no longer imputed sin, and if it is sin that separates us from God, then we can no longer be separated from God – because sin is no longer imputed. One plus one equals two in proper theology.

John next says, “but he who has been born of God keeps himself.” The Greek reads, “but the (One) having been begotten of God guards over him.” This is not referring to the person keeping himself from sin (which has just been shown to not be the case). Rather, and quite clearly, it is speaking of Jesus Christ – the One begotten of God – who protects the person from the imputation of sin.

The phrase *ho gennētheis* or “the was begotten” is only found here. John is clearly indicating that it is Jesus, and that He is guarding over those who have come to God through Him. The verb is present tense. Right now, at this moment, and at each moment that follows, He (Jesus) guards over him (the one born of God). Because of this, the resounding words of joy are next stated by John, “and the wicked one does not touch him.”

If sin was still imputed to a believer, meaning any sin at all – any single infraction – then that believer would lose his salvation. It only took one sin of Adam to plunge all of humanity into absolute and complete separation from God. The spiritual connection to God was lost, and it was only restored through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Until that happened, all humanity was under the authority of the wicked one – meaning the devil. But this takes us right back to 1 John 3:8, 9 –

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”

A change takes place in the believer when he comes to Christ. That change is one which is noted by Christ, and from then on, He personally covers the believer. The word that John uses, and which is translated as “touch,” is *haptomai*. As noted by HELPS Word Studies, it signifies “touching that *influences*.” It is touching “in a way that alters (*changes, modifies*) them.”

The devil can no longer modify what has been wrought by Christ. He may be able to ruin our day, ruin our testimony, or makes us miserable through allowed testing (see the book of Job), but he may not in any way change our state before God, because sin is no longer imputed to us.

It would be a pitiful existence if we were saved by Christ, just to be lost again to the devil. It would demonstrate a failure in the intent and purpose of Christ’s coming in the first place. But man is saved by Christ, he remains saved by Christ, and he will forever continue to be saved by the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Life application: Yes, we may be afflicted by Satan or his demons, but He can never possess us. We are securely in the powerful grasp of Jesus and should have no fear that we can ever lose our salvation. The devil is permanently defeated in our lives.

Understanding this truth, no person who teaches that a believer can lose his salvation should be heeded. That person is to be rejected, his theology is to be ignored, and his lack of understanding the glory of what God has done in Jesus Christ is to be looked at with utter astonishment. Such a teaching diminishes the glory of what God has done, it mars the significance of the cross, and it mocks the power of Christ to continue to protect those who have come to Him by faith. Turn away from such perverse people.

Lord, we know that the devil will buffet us and try to pull us away from You, but we also know that You are stronger than him – infinitely stronger. We will have no fear as we go about our lives. Should we falter, we will get back up, brush ourselves off, and proceed on in Your good grace! You are fully able to keep us from his ability to gain control over us ever again. Thank You for this surety! Amen.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one. 1 John 5:19

John now presents a second “we know.” This time, he says, “We know that we are of God.” He just said, “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin.” The reason for this is that Christ keeps watch over us and guards us (through the non-imputation of sin) and therefore, “the wicked one does not touch him.” As a reminder, the word translated as “touch” signified that the devil has no power to bring about a change in the person.

Understanding these points, which John states as facts, we can then grasp the difference between believers and the rest of the world. When John says, “We know,” it does not mean that everyone grasps these things. It means that they are available to be grasped. In other words, these are truths which exist, even if we have not reasoned them out or been instructed in their contents. The first clause, however, should be something that every believer grasps. Unfortunately, it is not always the case.

The words of the gospels, including the words of Jesus recorded there – as well as the rest of the New Testament – testifies to the fact that when a believer comes to God, he can be certain of this truth. As John says, “We know that we are of God.” The Greek preposition *ek* is used. It signifies “out of” or “from.” The source of who we are as believers is from God. The truth of John’s words is clearly revealed in the first chapter of his gospel record –

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12, 13

To be begotten of God means to be of God. Paul frequently uses the term “son” to indicate the relationship between God and those who come to Him through Christ. There is a Father/son relationship which is established through a process of adoption into the family of God (See Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5, etc). To contrast this, John next says, “and the whole world lies *under the sway* of the wicked one.”

These words support those of the previous verse. John said, “the wicked one does not touch him (meaning believers),” but those who have not come to Christ are under the complete control of the devil. The word John uses, translated as “lies,” means exactly that. When one lies, he is in a state which is set. One doesn’t amble around when lying. Thus, the idea is that of total control.

Therefore, the words “under the sway of” which are inserted by the translators are not strong enough. They make it seem as if the devil has the authority to manipulate them, something which is true, but it is stronger than that. The idea is that of full authority.

A person may be able to make an animal do certain things, but he may not have full control and authority over that animal. The same is true with a computer program. A computer hacker may be able to cause a computer (have sway over) to mine bitcoin for him, but the rest of the computer is still under the authority of the owner who doesn’t even know a portion of the computer is being used.

However, nonbelievers are under the authority of the devil. He doesn’t need to sway them; they are his property. This was confirmed, for example, in Chapter 3 –

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8

This is why the doctrine of the non-imputation of sin is so important, and it is why John has brought it up several times in this epistle in various ways. If sin were imputed to believers, they would no longer belong to God. They would again be the possession of the devil. But John, like Paul, has clearly shown that this can no longer happen. It is, once again and logically demonstrated, a presentation of the doctrine of eternal salvation.

Believers go from the authority of the devil to the authority (once and forever) of God when they come to Him through Jesus Christ. To state otherwise is to call into question the truth of the Word of God, the faithfulness of God to His word, and it is to diminish – or rather to utterly obliterate – the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ for those who have trusted in Him.

Life application: Because we are born of God, we know that we are of God. This is the same as saying, “We know that we are of the human race because we are born of Adam.”

Being born of God then unites us with Him. In turn, we can never again be overtaken by the devil. This is the dividing line between saved believers and the lost – those who are born of God are of God, and those who are not belong – lock, stock, and barrel – to the devil. This power of the devil encompasses the entire system of the world. Although we live in the world, we are not of the world. For this reason, we need to live as if it is the case.

Further, we are to accept that the change in us is real, it is fully capable to save us, and it is fully capable to continue to save us. If sin is imputed to believers after coming to Christ, then the Bible is in error, the message of the cross is a lie, and there is no hope for man.

If you are struggling with these things, continue to think them through. The word is clear, but our ability to comprehend it is limited. The more we meditate on the word, the more our minds will become attune to the truths that are presented there. Put away the things of the world and focus on the things of God.

Heavenly Father, you have given us the dividing line between the world and You – our Lord Jesus. Give us the wisdom to study Your word, and in turn to learn more about You and what You have done for us in the work of Jesus. Keep us from the temptations of the world and keep us focused on You alone. We pray this so that you will be glorified. Amen.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John 5:20

John now presents his third and final “we know,” saying, “And we know that the Son of God has come.” John has laid out this fact, both in his gospel, and also in this epistle (which may have been a letter which accompanied the gospel or a letter sent separately).

John the Baptist proclaimed this fact right at the beginning of the gospel, saying, “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” John the Apostle declared it right at the beginning of his epistle, saying –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and

bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:1-4

The evidences are laid out through all of the gospels, Acts, and the other epistles as well. There is as much (and indeed there is more) certainty that the Son of God has come as any other event in ancient history. This is even more apparent when the prophets before Christ’s coming prophesied in minute detail of when He would come, to where He would come, what He would do, and etc. With this surety of testimony available, John then says, “and has given us an understanding.”

The words here are not referring to a new ability not known before. We are the same species now that we were since creation. All humans have the same ability (if they are willing to use it) to think rationally, to test the evidences before them, to make logical conclusions, and so on. What John is referring to are the evidences presented. The record of the prophets, the writings of the gospels, the explanation in the epistles, the unveiling of the mysteries previously hidden, and so on. They are now available to believers, and thus we have been given an understanding, which is, “that we may know Him who is true.”

This is speaking of God, the Creator, and the One to whom all men are accountable to. There is one God, and the writings found in Scripture are what we would call “special revelation.” We can know things about God from nature, from thinking logically, and etc. This is known as “general revelation.” But there are things we cannot know about God unless He specifically reveals them to us. The highest form of special revelation is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. From that, we learn what is written about Him and His work.

In knowing these things, we are given an understanding to “know Him who is true.” What is otherwise completely unknowable about God can now be understood. The testimony is true, as is stated in John 3:33, “He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.” And not only do we know that the God we are presented with in Scripture is true, but we can also “know Him.” This was stated in John’s gospel as well –

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.” -John 1:18

The God presented to us is true, and it is the Son – Jesus – who has declared Him. Thus, we can “know Him who is true.” The thoughts presented fit as perfectly as the most carefully made glove. The one who is given this understanding has a sound, logical, verifiable, and readily available understanding of these things. Along with this blessed state, John then adds, “and we are in Him who is true.”

The words here speak of intimate union and fellowship. Where we once were alienated from God, we are now brought near through Christ. What is implied here, but stated explicitly elsewhere, is the truth that without Christ this intimate union would be impossible. The only way to be united to God – and to have this personal, eternal, and blessed relationship – is to come to God through Christ. This is, as John next says, “in His Son Jesus Christ.”

What this means is that to be in “Him who is true,” meaning in God, one must be in Jesus Christ. When one is in Christ, He is in God. It should be noted that the construction of the Greek here is the same as was seen in verse 5:19 concerning the wicked one –

“in the evil one”

“in the (Him who is) true; in the Son of Him Jesus Christ.”

John has formed a complete divide between the two. On one side is “the whole world,” and on the other are those “in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.” There are no other options available. One is either in Christ, or he is in the devil.

John then finishes with the words, “This is the true God and eternal life.” The words are in the masculine singular – “He is the true God and life eternal.” Because of this, scholars debate whether this is referring to God or to Jesus. The Pulpit Commentary says, “We must be content to leave the question open; both interpretations make excellent sense, and none of the arguments in favour of either are decisive.”

Albert Barnes gives the most delightful 5-point analysis which resoundingly favors the words pointing to Jesus – for obvious reasons. It is well worth reading, and it can be seen at this link – https://biblehub.com/commentaries/1_john/5-20.htm.

The answer to this is not unimportant, and so to understand more fully what John is relaying, the previous clauses need to be carefully laid out and examined –

- 1) that we may know Him who is true.
- 2) and we are in Him who is true.
- 3) in His Son Jesus Christ.

4) This is the true God and eternal life.

The answer to the question is obvious when placed this way. John first gives the reason for the coming of Christ. It is so that we may know Him who is true. It is speaking of God. As noted above, we cannot know God in this special way without Him revealing Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ.

John then says, “we may know Him who is true.” This must be speaking of God, because he then says, “in His Son Jesus Christ.” He is showing that there are two entities being referred to by stating it this way – God and Jesus Christ. However, despite being two entities, they are One. The words “This is the true God” refer to both clauses – Him who is true/in His Son Jesus Christ. Despite being masculine singular, they are One. There is no Jesus Christ apart from God, and there is no God other than the God – who is inclusive of Jesus Christ – because Jesus is God, and because there is One God.

This is no different than Matthew 28:19. There it refers to the “name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” However, the word “name” is singular. There is One name because there is One God. The three Persons within the Godhead do not negate that they are – together – One God.

What John is doing is demonstrating the truth – repeated elsewhere – that God has revealed Himself, God reveals Himself, and God will eternally reveal Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. When John says, “This is the eternal God and true life,” he is simply repeating, while restating, what he said as he opened his epistle –

“the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” 1 John 1:2

The life, meaning Jesus Christ, was with the Father. The life, meaning eternal life, was manifested to us in the Person of Jesus Christ – who is with the Father. This is the true God and eternal life.

Life application: We know we have been given an understanding which is the ability to clearly receive and discern spiritual truth. Unlike others who claim to be spiritual, but have no foundation, we have the absolute assurance that we “may know Him who is true.” This means that Jesus has revealed the very Creator God to us.

The God who is Spirit and cannot be seen, is clearly and completely revealed in the Son. This revelation is unlike the gods invented by man. All other religions, despite their

claims, are based on an incorrect and finite understanding of God. Jesus, however, is the true revelation of God and His depiction reaches to the infinite – in other words, our ability to learn from Him and seek out His glory will never end. All other religions necessarily end because they are based on finite contemplations.

So “we may know Him” is an eternally ongoing gift to us. We also know that “we are in Him.” As believers in Jesus Christ, we are adopted sons of God. We have moved from death to life and are eternally secure in His salvation. This then “is the true God and eternal life.” We have the Son and therefore we have the Father. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Jesus is the cornerstone, and we are living stones being built into an eternal temple in which God will dwell. It is the most incredible thing to ponder! Thank You, O God, for Jesus.

Lord, may we never be so haughty as to assume that we have merited Your grace. We can only look to what You have done and say, “O God, how great Thou art!” When we were separated and lost, You sent our Great Shepherd to find us and bring us to Your fold. And here we are...looking forward to eternity in Your glorious presence, ever praising You. Amen.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. 1 John 5:21

John finishes this epistle with a simple thought. It seems almost disconnected from anything else he has said, as if it is an afterthought affixed to the main letter, but such is not the case. He begins this final verse with the word *teknia*, or “little children.” It is the seventh time he has used this term, and it is the last use of it in the New Testament. He uses it in a form of fatherly address to his darlings, forming an appeal that is to be taken to heart. With that said, he continues with, “keep yourselves from idols.”

Here, John uses a much stronger term for “keep” than he did in verse 18. The word here can be equated with a soldier guarding a garrison. In other words, “defend heavily” yourselves from idols.

The word “idols” is prefixed by an article that is generally not translated, but rightly should be – “keep yourselves from the idols.” The people of the world were, and continue to be, surrounded by idols of all kinds. In saying, “keep yourselves from the idols,” it bears the intent of, “keep yourselves away from anything that will draw your attention from God.”

The connection to the epistle is obvious. In his previous verse, he said, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” Idols are false gods, which are no gods at all. They do not reveal anything about God, nor do they offer anything from God. In drawing near to idols, one moves away from the true God.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all people to pursue the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In this, the true God is made manifest to us. And that thought then goes back another verse where John says that “the whole world lies *under the sway of* the wicked one.” If one draws near to idols, which are not of God, they are drawing near to that which lies within the domain of the devil.

John’s desire for God’s people, his “little children,” is similar to what Paul admonished toward those in Thessalonica – “Test all things, hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22). By keeping from the idols, John’s addressees would be on the proper path to do just that.

Finally, John finishes the epistle with the word, “Amen.” In essence, “So let it be.” John has instructed his little children, and now he anticipates that it will be so for them, and for all who afterward receive his letter, taking it to heart and applying its truths to their lives.

Life application: The book of 1 John has been an immensely wonderful learning experience on many levels. Now, more than ever, it is hoped you will find it a book to be viewed as a wonderful treasure of insight into God’s salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this final verse, John doesn’t distinguish between types of idolatry. Instead, he speaks of all forms – both physical idols which were (and remain to this day) present in the world around us – as well as non-physical ones, such as false beliefs. Anything in our life which takes the place of worshipping God through Jesus Christ is an idol. It can be our car, our girlfriend, incorrect concepts of Jesus (such as those that various fringe cults proclaim), statues of religious figures, etc.

If you go into a church or other religious area and bow or speak to a statue, you are committing idolatry. This isn’t something to be taken lightly by saying, “Oh, I’m thinking about God as I do this.” Rationalizing away your actions which are in conflict with such a direct command from the Bible is actually a second form of idolatry. You have placed an

idol before God, and then you've placed yourself above God by disobeying the word that He has given you. Think this through carefully; and please, please...keep yourselves from the idols. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we honor You because only You reveal the Father to us. Keep our hearts, our eyes, and our thoughts from idolatry, and keep our souls desiring only You. We love You Lord, and we give you our praise and honor. May You be highly exalted! Amen.