

Commentary on the Book of 1 John

1 John 1

1What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--

2and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

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

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

The writer of this epistle is John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee. He is the disciple whom Jesus loved and the one who wrote the gospel of John. This particular epistle is not written to a specific church but to believers in general. It is obvious that chapter two and following are to believers (see 2:1 and 5:13). The truth is that the entire book is for believers, but he writes the first chapter as a means of filtering out any who are not in Christ. John is concerned that there are those who think that it is acceptable to continue walking in sin after being saved. Verses 5 through 10 of the first chapter are used to present the essence of the gospel and its transforming power. If the believers are indeed born again because they have believed the message of 1:5-10, then they ought not to sin. Thus, there is an evangelistic element to the first chapter. Proper interpretation of 1 John requires an understanding that the first chapter is an exhortation to those with whom John does not as of yet have fellowship. This is why he is proclaiming Christ so that the entirety of his readership “may have fellowship” with him (v. 3).

John probably wrote the epistle late in his life towards the end of the first century. Likely, at this time he was the only apostle yet alive, and people would have been eager to hear a testimony of the last remaining disciple of Christ. John had been an eye witness of Christ and all that He had said and done. Thus, he emphasizes from the start his credibility in terms of his testimony. He saw what was from the beginning (emphasizing the Deity of Christ and making a similar point as he did when he started his gospel in John 1:2). He heard the very words of Christ, he saw Him with his own eyes, He observed His actions, and He touched Him with his own hands. The Word of Life, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was known personally and intimately by John. Jesus showed us how to have eternal life as He Himself was the Life. A major theme of John which he explains in 5:13 is that he wants the believers to whom he writes to know that they have eternal life. It is largely for that reason that he writes this epistle. Jesus was the life. He is sure of this. He made it possible for us to have eternal life. Of this he is also sure. Formerly eternal life in the person of Christ had been with the Father in heaven, but He came to us in human likeness and showed us the way to the Father. He taught us how to have eternal life so that we, too, could be with the Father. He writes of Christ and emphasizes his testimony because he wants those in his listening audience who do not yet have fellowship with God and Christ (though they may profess to know God) to know

Christ and receive eternal life. John (speaking on behalf of some others which are not named, hence the plural pronoun) believes that his joy and the joy of other believers will be made complete if those who are outside of Christ turn to Christ. Paul in Philippians 2:1 had asked the Philippians to be unified in Christ and love one another in order to make his joy complete. The Biblical theme that we see from these godly men is that they were burdened for evangelism and for unity among believers. The goal was that Christ would build His church and that the church would be loving and unified, an honest and credible testimony of Christ in and of itself, just as John was.

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

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

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

The message of truth which John explained also in His gospel is that Christ is Light and the one who lightens every man. Here we see that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. God is completely holy and pure. Those who will come to Him must first understand His perfection. John starts his gospel message with God's holiness and perfection, of which we fall way short. John makes a statement similar to the thinking of James. Many people think they are of the Light, believing that they are born again. Yet they deceive themselves for they do not walk in the light but in darkness, not practicing the truth. It is incongruous to say that a person is a Christian and for them to live in constant sin with no sign of remorse whatsoever. A Christian can backslide, as the last two verses of James indicate. However, as James said, faith without works is dead. A true believer must manifest works and a change of heart in some way. It is not that we never sin, but that we do not make a practice or lifestyle of it. Like a doctor has a practice of medicine, so the professing Christian who is not really saved has a practice not of faith and holiness but of sin. It is their job, their disposition, their joy, their love, and the fullness of their being. However, if we walk in the Light of God and Christ, we can be assured that we are indeed brothers in Christ, saved from sin. We can be sure that we have received the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin once and for all. The point John is making is that those who have received Christ are not merely forgiven but they are cleansed from the sin patterns that plagued the unbeliever. This is the message that Paul presents in Romans 6 when he explains that we are saved by grace so that we don't have to be slaves of sin. Grace is not an excuse to sin, as those who walk in darkness would like to make it, but rather it is a freedom from having to sin. True believers understand this and live like it, albeit imperfectly as we are all in a growth process. We are born as infants in Christ, and we must be trained as to how we are to live and how to appropriate faith and trust in God. It is a process, but there should be signs and evidence of growth.

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

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

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

John began his gospel to the unbelievers who thought they were believers by explaining that God is holy and has no sin or defect whatsoever. He is pure light. However, in order to take part in His Light and Life, we have to admit that we are sinners. We have to acknowledge the sin that is in every man who is outside of Christ. These people professed faith but never acknowledged their sin, yet they walked in it. They deceived themselves into thinking that they were free from sin. This verse should not be used to show that believers should be always having sin issues, though believers do stumble (James 3:2). It is speaking to the unsaved professing believer who hasn't repented of his sin. John's call to the believer is that they do not practice sin. This is what the believer must derive from this section. His faithfulness in terms of practical holiness will be a reason for him to be able to know that he is indeed saved. The unbeliever must come to a place where they acknowledge their sin before God, confess it to Him, and trust in Him Who is faithful and righteous to forgive them all of their sins. He will cleanse them from all their unrighteousness and make it possible to live with a new disposition of hatred toward sin rather than the love of it. Jesus by having to die on the cross for our sins made it clear that all men are sinners. He came to seek and save the lost and for the sick, not the healthy. If we don't admit that we are sinners apart from Christ, we make Jesus' claims to be false, and we accuse Him of being a liar. In addition, we make a mockery of the cross because we act as though He didn't need to die because of our inherent righteousness. Such is a lie from the devil, and it is evidence that the truth of God's Word is not in us.

1 John 2

**1My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;
2and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.
3By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.**

John now directs his thoughts to the believers. He loves them dearly as is clear by calling them his little children. Perhaps these are people that John was instrumental in bringing to Christ. His purpose in sharing about how true Christians do not continue walking in darkness is so that the believers don't continue in sin. This is further emphasis that John is not telling us in the first chapter to, as believers, say that we are in sin or have sin. That was for unbelievers. John proves that here by emphasizing that his intention is that we do not sin. John reminds us, for we do fall at times, that we have an Advocate in Jesus who Himself is righteous and through Whose righteousness we have access to the Father and to eternal life. Jesus is the One who will present us faultless before God. In that sense He is our Advocate, for we could not save ourselves or make ourselves righteous. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the believers in that He pacified the anger and animosity of God which God has toward sinners (though He loves them and demonstrated such, His justice forces Him to be their enemy). Note that Jesus satisfied the wrath of God for the sins of all mankind. It makes no sense that He didn't die for the

sins of all when it explicitly said that He did. There is an opportunity for all to come to faith because Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for all men to be saved. The issue is that many refuse His grace and do not take the free gift of salvation. Thus, though the opportunity for righteousness is available, they do not take advantage of it, remaining enemies of God. If we keep His commandments and do not walk in darkness, we come to the assurance of the fact that we are indeed born again and in Christ. This is a summary statement of John's message from the first chapter. True believers can have confidence in their eternal life because of their practical holiness in day to day living. Those who continue in sin are the ones who need to fear and are likely those who are double-minded and unstable, as James refers to in James 1.

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

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

6the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Making the point again, John says that the one who claims to be in Christ but who does not walk in His ways and keep His commandments is a liar. These professing Christians are not possessing of true saving faith because of the obvious lack of conformity to righteousness which would be consistent with a person who has truly repented and received Christ as Lord and Savior. It is those who keep His Word, however, who have had the love of God perfected in them. They are not perfect but God's love is perfect in that it has truly changed them from the inside out and set them free from their enslavement to sin. The one who says He is a follower of Christ ought to Himself continue walking in His ways.

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

He calls the believers beloved because he deeply cares for their well-being and desperately wants them to be assured of their salvation. He says that what He is telling them about walking in faith and living in holiness is nothing new. Christ's teachings explained that in order to come to faith, one had to repent and believe. His commands for Christian living were of a very high expectation and standard. That Christians would live in a way consistent with their calling in love and unity and holiness is nothing new. He is merely repeated an old truth which they have heard before. Yet it needs to be repeated because it has not been heeded.

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

On the other hand, he says that he is writing a new commandment to them in light of the fact that some professing believers who are as of yet not truly saved may be hearing these truths for the first time. As such, as the truth goes forward and reveals the darkness, more can come to the Light, which is already shining in some of their hearts.

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

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

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

The professing Christian who hates his brother but says that he is saved is in the darkness until now. The darkness is waning and the Light of Christ is shining brighter and brighter because the unsaved are realizing that and the saved and becoming more convinced of their salvation. It is impossible for a person to not love other Christians and be a Christians himself. John 13:34-35 makes it clear that disciples of Christ are known by their love. If there is no love, then there is reason to conclude that the person is not a disciple. The one who is actively loving other Christians abides in the Light of Christ, and there is no reason for him to doubt his faith or to continue in sin. Yet those who hate others and in darkness and continuing to walk in darkness, even if they think they are saved. Such a person is truly lost and dead in their sins, not knowing the Light and being blind so as not to perceive the Light and learn to love. They need to be reborn before they can see and love others.

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

James explains why he is writing to the younger people in his audience. He says that He wants them to know that they have been forgiven for the sake of the name and work of Christ. It is typical for a younger child to question whether or not they are saved. Many who are raised in a Christian family or community make a profession of faith early on. As they grow a bit older, they begin to have doubts as to if they are truly saved. John's message to them is to rest assured in their salvation because Jesus forgave their sins once and for all. In verse 14, John re-emphasizes the fact that the young children know God, implying that they should rest confident in their salvation.

13I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

14I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

James now addresses the older men and the younger men. He explains that he wanted to write to the older men because they have known Christ from the beginning. He says this

twice. It seems to carry the idea that he is wishing that they persevere in faith and holiness so that they can live their final days in confidence before the coming of Christ. He wants them to finish strong, not compromising toward the end. To the young men, James says he writes because they are strong, they have overcome the evil one, and the Word of God abides in them. Temptations are numerous as decisions are weighty in the time of young manhood. Yet those John is referring to have made wise decisions and stood strong against temptation, overcoming the devil through faith in Christ. They know the Word of God. James only writes so that they will be sure of their faith and continue in the strength and holiness that they presently demonstrate. He has made it clear to all how they can know if they are not saved. What he seems to be saying is that the true believers that he knows have no reason to doubt their salvation because they are faithful. The dividing line between professing Christians and true Christians is obvious, and that is James intention. There is great confidence in knowing one is saved, and such is not too difficult a task when one sees how Christ has transformed their life and enabled them to walk consistently and persistently in holiness.

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

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

His call to the believers is that they do not make a sinful choice to love anything that is in the world. In fact, if this is standard procedure for a professing believer in that they love the world, they cannot possibly love the Father also. True Christians are sometimes lured into sin, they sometimes compromise, and they sometimes rebel for a time. Yet the love of the Father is in their hearts. They don't enjoy sin like the world enjoys it. They make allegiances with the world, but in their deepest heart's desire, they do not love the world. They are acting as though they do, but it is not who they are. Those who make a practice of loving the world and there is no sign of any struggle or bitterness toward God have reason to question their salvation.

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

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

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

James reminds these believers that time is short before Christ will return and carry out His wrath and render justice. As that time nears, more and more antichrists will appear. There will be one final antichrist, but in the meantime there will be many who walk in his ways, denying the faith and living in sin. Even in John's time, only a few generations after Christ walked the earth, there were many false teachers who loved the world and denied Christ. As these deceptions continue to increase (which they will and are 2

Timothy 3), we can have confidence that Christ's return grows nearer. Whenever we find ourselves doubting whether Jesus really is going to come, we need only look at the sheer quantity of lies that have been invented. More and more evil continues to be invented, and such is the nature of the last hour. Many had defected from the professing body of believers. Yet this is evidence, says John, that they were never really of the body. These are not Christians who are carried away and lured into a pattern of sin and deception. These are those who were never really saved. If they had been, says John, they would have stayed with the church. But they went out as a means of demonstrating to all that they were never saved. The expression "went out" carries with it a decisive denunciation and clear separation. These are those who want nothing to do with God because of their love for the world. It is not that they are just rebelling against God for a time, but they are those who truly love the world and its ways. They never truly confessed Jesus as God and Lord. Thus, they easily and quickly make themselves apostates and deny Christ. A Christian who strays from the path usually doesn't deny Christ, they just deny the fact that they want to obey Him. Such incurs the discipline of God as He draws them back to Himself and to the truth. In this case, these apostates want nothing to do with Christ as well as in His ways. The true believers have the Holy Spirit who has given them insight to know that they are truly saved or not. This is not a perceptiveness that allows one to judge another's heart, but it does allow them to judge accurately their own hearts. There is also some level of discernment present through the ministry of the Spirit as to when it is clear that a person is not saved. We can't judge with certainty, but John has given us many reasons which should make us question and challenge a person's commitment to Christ.

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

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

John does not write because his audience does not know the truth but because they do know it. He is giving them tools to be assured in their faith and to be able to more adequately discern the true antichrists. The antichrist makes it clear that they deny that Jesus is the Christ. They don't want anything to do with an association that would indicate that they have surrendered their life to Jesus. This is the antichrist, which is typically much different from a believer who strays off course. They usually don't deny Christ, but they are deceived into inventing a Christ that suits their present tastes. The antichrist denies both the Son and the Father, rejected God and submission to the truth altogether.

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

If a person denies the Son, then they have rejected the Father also. In confessing the Son, they receive the Father also. One cannot reject God and receive Christ. In the same way, one cannot reject Christ but say they love God. God is only confessed, received, and

loved through Christ, and salvation through faith in Christ is only meaningful if one also agrees that Christ is God. That Jesus is God is central.

24As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

The believers on the other hand, in contrast to the antichrists, are to let the truth of God and His Word abide in them. They are to continue in the truth and not walk in darkness. If this is true, if they hold fast to their confession, they will abide and remain in the Son and in the Father. A true Christian does hold their confession because God won't let them go. It is those who defect and deny Christ that never knew Him in the first place. This is why those who take the mark of the antichrist are not in the Book of Life. They denounce Christ, showing that they never knew Him. I believe that it is possible to recant and repent upon taking the mark, but who would want to put themselves in such danger and misery, spitting metaphorically upon the face of Christ?

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

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

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

Jesus has promised to give us eternal life. We can be sure of this. John writes these things so that we can discern those who are trying to lead believers away into deception. It seems that some must have been teaching that one can be in Christ and still practice sin at the same time or hate their brother. What James is saying is that that teaching is of the antichrist. Things are more black and white than that. Those who truly are not saved will defect and deny Christ. Those who are true believers will abide in Him. Believers have the anointing of the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. In one sense, believers don't need teachers of the Word because they have the Holy Spirit of God to teach them the Word and give them understanding as they read, study, and meditate upon it. I am a firm believer in this truth. As the Psalmist says in 119:99, "I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation." In one sense, we do not need a teacher because we have the Holy Spirit who will illumine our minds and hearts to understand the will and ways of God through His Word. Such is the belief that Christians hold that Scripture is something that each person can understand and interpret. That doesn't mean that there are several interpretations. What it means is that if a multiple persons are all studying the Scripture, the Spirit can lead them all to the same place if they are patient, study in faith, and learn from a pure heart with no selfish agenda. Yet there is a clear ministry of teaching, otherwise God would not gift some to do so. How do these two work together? Even those who teach others require the work of the Holy Spirit in and through them and on the part of the listener to be able to receive and understand the truth. Whether in listening to a sermon or in our own private study,

we are all dependent upon the Holy Spirit Who will guide us into all truth. It is His teaching that is ultimately effective and true. It is in this teaching which we must remain.

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

The reason for remaining faithful to the commands of Christ is so that we can be assured of our salvation at the coming of Christ. We know that Christ will judge us for how we have used the gifts and resources with which He has entrusted us, so we, if we have been unfaithful, will shrink away when we see our Master. Like a child who doesn't do the chores that his parent asked, and then the parent arrives home unexpectedly, he will shrink away in fear because he knows he has disappointed his parent and deserves discipline. This ought to be motivation for us to continue to remain in a condition of practical holiness, keeping the Words of Christ.

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

We know that Christ is righteous. If this is true, which it is, then we can also be sure that those who practice righteousness of born again in Christ. Obviously, no one who is outside of Christ can truly love as Christ loved. They are enslaved to sin. Thus, those who do love and who do live in holiness are drastically different from those in the world. The unbeliever may want to do good but the good he wants to do, he doesn't do for he is not able to do it. Yet the believer desires good and does do it. His faith has works. He is not simply one who claims to have religion or faith. There is a conditional righteousness to prove it. Obedience is the outworking of the true gospel.

1 John 3

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

To have the privilege of being called a child of God is a great privilege and blessing of God which demonstrates His great love toward us. We are His children, and thus the world does not know us. We are distinct from the world and its ways, having been called by God to be conformed to the image of His Son. The world didn't know Christ, but rejected Him. He was in the world but not of it, just as we are. Certainly those who are in the world know we exist, for we interact with them every day. What they don't know is why we do what we do and why we live like we live. That is why we must preach the gospel to them. They have no understanding for no one seeks God and no one understands. That is why they need a preacher.

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

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

We as children of God will one day meet Christ in the air. We will be given new bodies that are immortal, and we will lay aside this corruptible frame. Yet such is yet to come. When Christ appears, we will in the twinkling of an eye be transformed into His likeness, for we will see Him just as He is. What a joy it will be to see our Savior on that day. Everything that we have lived for and hoped for will be manifest. Hopes will be realized, and joy will be complete. In light of our fixing our hope upon Christ (1 Peter), we purify ourselves just as He is pure. People say that if we preach a gospel that is based upon grace and not works that there will be no incentive to do works. The obvious reality is that there is incentive to do good works. The believer has a new heart with different loves so it will be natural to do good works. Furthermore, we have the opportunity in the future to meet Christ, and we don't want to be caught sinning when He appears. I can't imagine how embarrassing and shameful that would be. Of course, He will forgive us, but why would we want to meet Christ with unconfessed sin? He is God and He is holy. In light of this truth, we have motivation to stay pure and continue in good works. Eternal rewards are a good motivator also.

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

5You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

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

Since sin is lawlessness, everyone who practices sin breaks the law of God. The reason for Christ coming was to take away sins and fulfill the requirements of the Law. In Christ there was no sin. Since Christ came to fulfill all righteousness and to make it possible for us to be righteous, we too ought to be righteous. Those who remain in Christ and who are truly His do not continue practices sin and loving the things of the world. Those who do this do not know Him, nor have they seen Him as He is and fallen on their knees as they see their sinfulness in light of His holiness.

7Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

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

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

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

The difference between those who are children of light and children of darkness is obvious. Those who practice righteousness as righteous. Those who practice sin are of the devil. The devil's ways are sin as he is the father of lies. Jesus came to defeat the devil once and for all by destroying his works. He did this by making it possible for all men to overcome the law of sin and death if they would receive Christ by faith. Those

who are born again in Christ do not practice sin. Here is the clincher: they cannot practice sin because they have the seed of Christ in them. They have been born of a righteous seed who Himself was without sin. Through the ministry of the Word of God, their seed was implanted in our hearts and souls, and it gave birth to a new life in Christ. Christ's seed remains in Him. It is part of His very makeup as a new creation in Christ. Such a person who is Christ's and of Christ cannot go on practicing sin. The two cannot coexist. If a person is truly born again, they will not continue practicing sin. They do not "carry out, execute, keep on, spend time, pass time, or celebrate sin," which is what practice implies. They are not dabbling in sin, but it is their very identity, love, and way of operation. It is how they live. They are merely carrying out the desires of their heart, which is not a heart that delights in God. Indeed, it cannot, for it has not been reborn. This sharp difference in practical living is the key to separating the sheep from the goats. The children of God are obvious by their love for their brothers and sisters and by the fact that they practice righteousness. Their joy is righteousness for they rejoice with the truth. The child of the devil hates the truth and rejoices in sin and give hearty support to others who sin. Sin is their identity. Their love is cold.

11For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

12not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Cain knew that he was supposed to love his literal physical brother. Yet, being a child of the evil one, he killed his brother. He did this because this is who he was on the inside. As a child of the devil, it only makes sense that he acted unrighteously and practiced sin. Abel was a child of righteousness, and Cain hated that just as the world hates Christ. It is no different now than it was in the beginning. The children of light and the children of darkness are obvious, based upon their conduct and love or lack thereof.

13Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

We are not to be surprised and shocked by persecution and hatred from the world. They hated Christ and they will hate His followers. As 2 Timothy 3 says, "All who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted." This is the way it is going to be. Those who are not reborn do not like those who are. They are enemies with God, and thus they are enemies with the children of God.

14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

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

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

We know that we are new creations in Christ who are not under the condemnation of spiritual death because of our love for one another. Those who hate, however, remain

under the sentence of death. Those who hate are murderers, as Jesus said. Murderers cannot inherit eternal life because no one with unconfessed sin can inherit eternal life. Thus, those who do not love but rather hate are children of the devil. Jesus showed us what the definition of love is by laying down His life for us. "Great love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John wrote that in his gospel, and not he emphasizes this ultimate manifestation of God's love through Christ once again for the purpose of showing that believers are to love one another with the same kind of love. The world doesn't understand this kind of love; thus it is the distinguishing mark of the Christian.

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

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

If we have something that a brother needs and yet we do not give it to him, there is no way that we truly are born again. If we are Christ's, His love would enable us to love our brother and give him what he needs. If we can't lay down a morsel or food or a piece of clothing for a brother in need, how will we lay down our lives for them? The true Christian demonstrates loves in all matters, including giving of material goods. Note also that that God doesn't expect us to give what we don't have. Those who do have the ability to give, however, are held accountable if they do not give as they ought. We are not to love with mere word by wishing someone well but we are to actually do something about their need. As James said, it does us no good to wish somebody well and let them starve. Faith has works, and works are evidence of saving faith.

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

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

21Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

22and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

As we demonstrate love to our brothers in deed and in truth, we will again be assured of the fact that we are indeed born again. Sometimes our heart will tell us that we do not love as we ought and give us reason to question whether or not we are saved. But we cannot go on mere feelings or desires based upon a given moment in a given day as feelings change and desires are stronger some days than others. But even if our heart condemns us and points out some unrighteousness, we know that God knows the true state of our hearts. The best place to be, however, is not in the place of uncertainty and doubt. The place to be is in a place of certainty and confidence before God. That can only happen when our heart does not condemn us. When we are sure of the fact that there is no impurity or evil intent in our heart, we will be able to get answers to our prayers and know the will of God as we pray. The person who hides sin in his heart and does not please God by keeping His commandments is not able to pray in such a way to

receive answers from his praying. It is only the prayers of a righteous man that accomplish much.

23This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

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

God has commanded us to believe in Christ and receive Him as our Savior. If we do this, we will please God. If we continue then in love others, we manifest evidence of our salvation, and we have confidence in our position in Christ. We remain in Christ and He remains in us if we keep His commandments (John 15:10). We can also know if we remain in Christ because of the ministry of the Spirit within our hearts, leading us, convicting us of sin, teaching us all things, and helping us to pray, among other things. The Spirit testifies to our spirits that we are indeed children of the Light (Romans 8:16).

1 John 4

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

2By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

A teaching is either of God and for God or from the devil and for the devil. The way to discern a false teacher and those who claim to have a revelation or word from God is to see if they believe that Jesus is the Christ and God in the flesh. There are many false teachings, cults, and religions that clearly do not believe in the deity of Christ. This is a clear indicator that a philosophy is not of God but of the devil and in the spirit of antichrist.

4You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

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

As children of God, we are from God and have thus overcome anything that is of the devil. Since Christ has conquered sin, death, and Satan, so we too in being His children are more than conquerors. Greater is God who is in us than any spirit of antichrist or of the devil. We ourselves are weak compared to evil spirits, but Christ in us has given us all authority over sin, death, and the devil. When the truth goes forth, it is obvious who is of the devil because they do not listen to the truth, understand the truth, receive the truth,

or change in light of the truth. They don't listen to the gospel, they don't listen to sound reasoning about the person and deity of Christ, and they don't appreciate the authority and inerrancy of the whole of Scripture. They tailor it to mean what they want it to mean. They do not have ears to hear or eyes to see. Such is the spirit of antichrist which is in the world. Those who do receive the Word of God are those who are Christ's.

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

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

As John has emphasized repeatedly, the Christian must love his brother. Those who love their brothers and sisters are from God, born of God, and they know God. Those who do not love do not know God, are not born of God, and are not from God. God is love, so His followers must manifest this love. If they do not, we have reason to believe that they are not of us.

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

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

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

God manifested His love to us by sending His Son in the world to die for our sins. This is the definition of love in that God initiated love while we were yet sinners. It wasn't that we loved God or that we were loveable. We were sinners and enemies of God. Yet God loved us and sent His Son to satisfy the penalty of God's wrath for those who would receive Christ in faith. John's challenge to us is that, if God has loved us even when we didn't deserve it, so too must we love each other whether we deserve it or not. We are to initiate love and love freely, not because someone has done something for us and not expecting anything in return.

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

No one has ever seen God face to face because if they did, they would instantaneously die because of His perfection, holiness, and splendor. God is so wonderful that we can't see Him. Yet we see Him in Christ, for those who have seen Christ have seen the Father. Though we haven't actually seen the Father, Who is Spirit, we have seen His likeness in the human manifestation of His Son. If we want others to see God, we must let God's love perfect us in love so that we love as He loved us. Our love in this way is again evidence that we are God's. The world, though it hates us, should see that we love the people in it, though we don't condone their rejection of Christ and sinful practices.

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

God gave us His Spirit which enables us to better love others which in turn shows us that we are indeed sons and daughters of God.

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

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

John says of his own experience and perhaps on behalf of some of those who also saw Christ after His resurrection that they have indeed seen and testify that God sent Jesus to save the world. They are sure of this fact, and they were eye witnesses of it. Salvation is for those who confess Jesus as God, for the spirit of antichrist denies Jesus as God. Those who are God's continue to practice love and righteousness as Christ supplies the strength and ability to do so.

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

17By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

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

We as believers were drawn by the Holy Spirit to receive salvation by grace through faith in Christ. We came to know God through Christ and have become convinced of the love that God demonstrated to the world through Christ on our behalf. This shows that God is love, and it emphasizes the fact that His followers must manifest His character attribute of love by loving others. As we love others as God loved us, we demonstrate Christ to the world, thus perfecting the work of God's love on our hearts. This gives us confidence in the day of judgment because we have evidence that God is at work in us, conforming us into the likeness of His Son by enabling us and motivating us to love. As God is love, so we are to be love to others in this world. When we love as God called us to love, we don't have to fear the judgment of Christ because we know that we are His and are being used by Him faithfully and in accordance with righteousness. There is no fear when this kind of love is manifested in and through us, for we become even more confident that we are Christ's and that Christ is pleased with our level of faithfulness. When we are Christ's, we can be sure that we will not face the punishment of God's wrath in hell. When we love, we can be sure that we are Christ's; thus, we will not have to live in fear over the state of or eternity as if it is in jeopardy.

19We love, because He first loved us.

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

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

We don't love because of something within ourselves. We love because Christ showed us love, taught us to love, and enables us to love by His Spirit within us. We can't profess to love God and hate our brother at the same time. James repeats this over and over again so that the believers are sure to understand that love is evidence of salvation. We cannot love God whom we cannot see if we don't love those whom we can see. Our actions are evidence of the faith that we have in what we hope for. God has commanded us to love our brothers and sisters, so we must do that. True believers do practice love, while those who are outside of Christ practice hate, for they are unable to love.

1 John 5

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

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

3For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

In contrast to the spirit of antichrist, the believer believes that Jesus is the Christ sent to die for the sins of the world and that He is the Son of God. Who ever is born of God and love God also loves any of God's children. When we love God an keep His commandments, we know that we love the children of God. That we are born of God, that we know God, that we love God, that we love others, and that we keep God's commandments come as a package deal for the child of God. We can't be one, have one, or do one without all of the rest. God's love leads us to keep His commandments which are not a toilsome or joyless task. It is not submitting to truths that will impair us or keep us from experiencing some healthy pleasure. Submitting to God's commands give us the ability to experience the greatest joy. Yet the greatest motivator for keeping God's commands is that we love God. The person who loves God by default delights in the commands of God. The person who doesn't love God hates the commands of God and views them as inconvenient, inhibiting, and unpleasurable. We do the commands of God because we want to out of the love for God that He has put in our hearts. We are not under some law and trying to keep it to earn God's favor or approval. We do the commands of Christ because it is who we are and in conjunction with the delights of our hearts.

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

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

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world through faith, which is the victory. The only way to escape the love of the world and be transformed into love God and His children is to be born again by faith by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. The believer has overcome sin, death, and Satan through faith in Christ who conquered all

three at on the cross. The challenge for believers is appropriating the truth by faith that they can have victory in and through Christ. Yet such is the mark of a true child of God.

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

7For there are three that testify:

8the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

When we received Christ, we are baptized in that our sins are washed away with a spiritual cleansing when we repent. We are also crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20), and His blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:9). So there is repentance and faith and also the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit draws men to God and then testifies within their spirits that they are indeed born again (Romans 8:16).

9If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

10The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

11And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

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

We often believe what another human being says, so how much more should we seriously believe and receive the testimony of God, especially concerning His Son. Indeed God has testified concerning His Son, saying that He has given us eternal life in and through His Son. The one who believes God has the testimony of God within Himself. The Spirit within him reminds him that he is a child of God. The person who refuses to believe in Christ makes God out to be a liar, saying in effect that God has not required faith in Christ for salvation. A person doesn't merely ignore the message of the gospel, they accuse God of lying. He makes it out to be that God has not sent His Son to die for the sins of the world. When a person believes this and rejects Christ, he calls God a liar and stores up wrath for himself. John then gives a very black and white statement about who can be saved. Those who have the Son have eternal life. Those who do not have the Son do not have eternal life.

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

14This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

John has written to the believers so that they can know that they have eternal life. Eternal life is not something that we wait until judgment day to see if we are in or out. Other world religions base entryway into the next life based upon works in this life. God bases it upon faith in His Son. Works are only the outgrowth of faith. John's point is that we can know if we are saved and that we shouldn't have to doubt. Our confidence will be strong if we walk according to the light, keep God's commands, grow in our knowledge of God, and love our brothers and sisters. In fact, we ought to be walking with God to such a degree that we pray according to His will and get answers to our prayers. Answered prayer is another sign of the certainty of our salvation, and it is a great confidence booster for the believer. The believer should be able to see just how different he is from the unbeliever. A watered down gospel makes the dividing line between faith and hell blurry. The gospel of Christ that says faith is not apart from works makes things much more clear, especially when we understand that only a believer can truly love and experience answered prayer.

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

17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

Sometimes believers sin. If we catch a brother or sister in sin, we need to ask God to restore such a person to practical holiness. God will answer that prayer because it is according to His will. But such a prayer must be in faith and from a righteous heart. A believer cannot commit a sin leading to the death of his spirit because He is a child of God. He may be a runaway or rebellious child of God, but he cannot undo the fact that he is a child of God. There is a sin that leads to death, that is, the death of the flesh. This dynamic occurs when a believer has been confronted by one, then two, and then the whole church body. Yet he hardens himself so that church discipline must be carried out, and he must be put outside of the body. Paul speaks of this as delivering one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that his spirit can be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5). This is why we don't pray for them to have life. We want their flesh to be destroyed. They must experience the ravaging affects of sin and be broken. Only then can they repent. Like the prodigal son, they must first dine with the pigs before they remember that they are a child of the King. They must stop leaning on themselves and controlling their destiny in the flesh. This will only happen if they can see the end of sin which is death. In this case, death is healthy because it is the death of the flesh and not death of the spirit. All unrighteousness is sin, which we know from the rest of John's letter. Sin is going against the commands of God, not loving others, rejecting Christ, lawlessness, and unrighteousness. There is sin that doesn't lead to death. When a believer sins, this will not sentence him to death in hell. He has been redeemed by the blood of Christ which covers all sin. He is not under bondage to sin. The only time sin has power is when we yield to it. In such cases, the flesh must be allowed to indulge the full effects of the sin so that sin can do its damaging and murderous work.

18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Those who are truly born again do not continue practicing sin. This is a sort of summary statement as John has made this point several times. There is a difference between the believer and unbeliever. A believer may harden himself, but his sin will eventually break him down as Satan does his dirty work. The unbeliever is mired in sin and can't do anything but continue in sin. God keeps the one who is born of God, and he will never experience spiritual death. Even as Satan works on the destruction of their flesh, God preserves their spirit. Like Peter in Luke 22:31-32, Satan sifts his reliance upon his flesh, but because of the sustaining power of God in answer to Christ's prayers, such a period of destruction of his flesh is actually a refining moment for him. He was a child of God, and God sustained him as He promises to do for us. The evil one cannot touch him in the sense of bringing his soul into hell. He can only do what God allows, which may be to break a person of their self-reliance.

19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ This is the true God and eternal life.

John draw the letter to a close with reminding us about what we know. We know that the entire world is in the control of the evil one, though he is ultimately subject to the sovereign will of God. However, we are in the world but not of it. We are children of God. Since Jesus has come and has opened our minds and hearts to receive Him as Lord and Savior, we know the truth and the truth has set us free (John 8:32) from blindness and enslavement as children of the devil. We are in Him, and thus we are not of the world. Our behavior should be evidence of that fact. Jesus alone is the truth and the means of eternal life. Knowing Him is eternal life (John 17:3).

21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

John closes with an exhortation that his dearly beloved children in Christ keep themselves from idols. Believers still have flesh and are susceptible to stumbling into sin. Yet, since John has made it clear that believers are to be different from unbelievers, it is only natural that he would challenge the believers to stay away from anything which would compromise their ability to manifest Christ. Anything that competes with loyalty to Christ is an idol. Anything that leads us to sin and have our affections taken from Christ is an idol. Whenever we do not seek the kingdom first, we fall into idolatry. Another way to define sin is idol worship. Many times the idol we worship is ourselves or our flesh, thinking that we can do things in our own strength apart from Christ. When Christ becomes our all in all, then we are living free from idols. Only then can we be a testimony of light for the Light. Only then can we experience answered prayer, and only then can we have abundant life (John 10:10).

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