

The First Epistle Of John



Sermon Outlines

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The First Epistle Of John

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Introduction To First John

1 John 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION

1. When Jesus to earth, He came not only to **live** a life, but to **give** life...

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

2. The **Gospel** of John was designed to produce faith so that we might have life - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
3. However, it is the **First Epistle** of John which discusses the nature of that life in greater detail - e.g., **1 Jn 3:14**
4. That we might be sure to live the sort of life God offers through His Son Jesus Christ, a careful study of **First John** is in order

[In this lesson, the first of several on **First John**, let's begin with some...]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. THE AUTHOR...

1. It will be assumed in the course of this study that the author is John, the beloved disciple of Jesus
2. Similarities between this epistle and the Gospel of John certainly suggests **internal** evidence for this conclusion
3. There is also **external** evidence that this John is the author:
 - a. Polycarp, a close associate of John, appears to make reference to this epistle at the beginning of the second century, in a letter to the Philippians
 - b. Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp, quoted from it and attributed it to John

B. THE RECIPIENTS...

1. No one is specifically mentioned
2. John may have been in Ephesus at the time, and that this was a general epistle to Christians throughout Asia Minor
3. However, John's comments in **1 Jn 2:20,27** suggests that John may have been addressing a particular group of Christians possessing certain spiritual gifts

C. DATE...

1. Estimations range from **60 A.D.** to **100 A.D.**
2. Most modern scholarship places it around **95 A.D.**, but there are also good reasons for believing it was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in **70 A.D.**

D. PURPOSE...

1. As declared by John throughout his epistle, he wrote it...
 - a. “that your joy may be full” - **1 Jn 1:4**
 - b. “that you may not sin” - **1 Jn 2:1**
 - c. “that you may know that you have eternal life” - **1 Jn 5:13a**
 - d. “that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” - **1 Jn 5:13b**
2. While these reasons may state the “positive” side of John’s purpose, it appears he was also responding to errors that were prevalent at the time - cf. **1 Jn 2:26**
 - a. If not fully developed in John’s day, there was at least a precursor to **Gnosticism**
 - b. Those who came to be called “Gnostics”...
 - 1) Claimed to have a superior knowledge (Grk. word for knowledge is “gnosis”)
 - 2) Believed all matter was evil
 - a) Therefore God did not create or have anything to do with the material universe
 - b) Therefore Christ could not have come in the flesh - cf. **1 Jn 4:1-3**
 - 1] One branch of gnosticism, **Docetism** (dokein, “to seem”), said that Jesus only “seemed” to be physical - cf. **1 Jn 1:1**
 - 2] **Cerinthus** taught that “Jesus” was physical, but that the “Christ” came upon him at his baptism, and left before his death, so that the “Christ-spirit” never suffered - cf. **1 Jn 5:6**
 - c. Their application to everyday living took two different directions; since all matter was thought to be evil...
 - 1) Some thought one should abstain altogether from anything that would satisfy the flesh
 - 2) Others claimed it did not matter what one did in the flesh (it was evil anyway), and to have full knowledge it was proper to explore everything

[Many of John’s comments in this epistle appear to address these false teachings. With this brief background to the epistle, let’s get right into the text by considering the first four verses. They appear to serve as a **prologue**, and reveal...]

II. JOHN’S AIM IN WRITING THIS EPISTLE (1:1-4)**A. CONCERNS THE “WORD OF LIFE”... (1)**

1. Which was “from the beginning”
 - a. John may have reference to the creation of the world - cf. **Jn 1:1**
 - b. Or he may have reference to the beginning of the gospel - cf. **1 Jn 2:7,13,24; 3:11**
2. This “Word of life” was...
 - a. “heard”
 - b. “seen with our eyes”
 - c. “looked upon”
 - d. “handled”

-- All emphasizing that this “Word” was “real, in the flesh”; an obvious reference to Jesus - cf. **Jn 1:1,14**

B. TO DECLARE THE “ETERNAL LIFE”... (2)

1. Which was...

- a. With the Father
- b. And then manifested to the apostles, who had seen and were bearing witness
2. Again, this is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ
3. But notice the use of the neuter gender throughout this passage
 - a. The emphasis appears to be on the “life” which Jesus had, especially that is “eternal” (“that eternal life”)
 - b. It is this same “life” which we can possess if we truly believe in the name of the Son of God - cf. **1 Jn 5:11-13**
4. Thus John is focusing on the “eternal life” which Jesus offers and made possible by His coming in the flesh

C. THAT YOU MAY HAVE “FELLOWSHIP” WITH US... (3)

1. Here is the reason for declaring the “Word of life”, the “eternal life”
2. By declaring this “life” (revealed by Jesus and through Jesus), “fellowship” is possible
 - a. Fellowship involves the idea of “sharing, communion”
 - b. The “sharing, communion” that the apostles have is with the Father and His Son
3. John wanted his readers to participate in this same sharing...
 - a. “that you also may have fellowship with us”
 - b. I.e., that you can experience what we are experiencing!
4. Why does John desire this? Read on...

D. THAT YOUR “JOY” MAY BE FULL... (4)

1. It is “fellowship” with the Father and Son that makes the “life” of a Christian so full of joy!
2. And just as Jesus came to give us “abundant life” (Jn 10:10), so John now writes...
 - a. That we may be sure to have fellowship with the Father and His Son, in Whom is “eternal life” - cf. **Jn 17:3**
 - b. So that our joy may be full!

CONCLUSION

1. From **1 Jn 1:1-4**, then, we learn that fullness of joy comes only when we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son
2. Only then do we have that “eternal life”, which was first manifested in the flesh by Jesus Himself, and now given only through Jesus - cf. **1 Jn 5:11-13**
3. In our next lesson, we shall see what John says is essential if we are to truly have fellowship with God (**1 Jn 1:5-2:2**)

If you are not a Christian, let me explain how such fellowship with God can begin... - cf. **Ga 3:26-27**

Fellowship With God

1 John 1:5-2:2

INTRODUCTION

1. In the first four verses of **First John**, we saw that John's aim in this epistle is...
 - a. To declare the "Word of life", the "eternal life" that was with the Father and has been manifested in Jesus Christ - **1 Jn 1:1-2**
 - b. That we might have fellowship with the Father and Son, just as the apostles do - **1 Jn 1:3**
 - c. That we might have fullness of joy - **1 Jn 1:4**
2. So to have fullness of joy, we must experience the kind of life that comes from having fellowship with God!
3. What is to be basis for fellowship with God, so that we have the life that produces fullness of joy?
 - a. In our text (**1 Jn 1:5-2:2**), John discusses the basis for fellowship with God
 - b. He also describes the place of sin, and how it can affect that fellowship

[With **verse 5**, we notice...]

I. THE PREMISE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (5)

A. "GOD IS LIGHT..."

1. The figure of light is often used in the Scriptures to describe that which is good, righteous, and true - cf. **Ep 5:8-10**
2. Therefore, God must always be thought of in this way: He is good, He is righteous, He is true!

B. "IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL..."

1. The figure of darkness would represent the opposite of light: evil, unrighteousness, falsehood
2. Therefore we can never think of God as countenancing sin, excusing it in any way

[With this basic understanding clearly established of what God is, John now addresses some...]

II. FALSE CLAIMS CONCERNING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (6-10)

A. "WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM", YET WALK IN DARKNESS... (6-7)

1. Why is this claim false?
 - a. Because fellowship means to have something in common
 - b. And we have seen that God is "light" (goodness, righteousness, truth)
 - c. "Walking in darkness", therefore, would be going against everything God stands for!
- cf. **Ep 4:17-24**
2. What is the result of such a claim?

- a. We are false in our **word** (“we lie”)
- b. We are false in our **deeds** (“do not practice the truth”)
3. Instead, we should **“walk in the light as He is in the light”**
 - a. I.e., instead of living a life characterized by “evil, unrighteousness, and error” (all the while claiming to have fellowship with God)...
 - b. ...we should live a life in harmony with God’s “goodness, righteousness, and truth”!
4. Only then will we experience:
 - a. **“Fellowship with one another”**
 - 1) That is, we will have fellowship with God
 - 2) Whereby we can share in that life which is eternal, and provides fullness of joy!
 - b. **“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son [which] cleanses us from all sin”**
 - 1) This suggests that “walking in the light” does not imply sinlessness
 - 2) Any more than “walking in darkness” implies total absence of good
 - 3) Rather, “walking in the light” suggests...
 - a) A life making progress under the positive influence of God’s “light”
 - b) A life enjoying the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood as one meets the conditions of forgiveness outlined below

B. “THAT WE HAVE NO SIN...” (8,9)

1. John may have reference to statements made by professing Christians who thought they had become sinless
2. The consequences of such a claim...
 - a. Self-deceit (“we deceive ourselves”)
 - b. Living in error (“the truth is not in us”)
 - c. I.e., walking in darkness, not walking in light!
3. Instead, we should freely confess our sins - **1 Jn 1:9a**; cf. **Pro 28:13**
4. Then God, who is “faithful” (trustworthy) and “just” (one who does what is right) will...
 - a. “forgive us our sins”
 - b. “cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
 ...through His mercy He makes it possible for to continue in fellowship with Him!

C. “THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED...” (10)

1. This claim may have been made by some denying they had ever sinned
2. The consequences of this claim are grievous...
 - a. We make God a liar! - cf. **Ro 3:23**
 - b. His Word is not in us!
3. How can anyone who makes such claims as these hope to have true fellowship with God, and thereby enjoy the life such fellowship gives?
4. Fellowship with God does not occur by making claims that turn God into a liar!

[Though affirming that we do sin, John is not seeking to encourage sin. Indeed, he is writing to discourage sin (**1 Jn 2:1**). But fellowship with God requires that a person takes sin seriously. To appreciate further how serious God takes sin, we learn that...]

II. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD REQUIRES AN ADVOCATE (2:1-2)

A. “WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS...” (1)

1. The word “advocate”...
 - a. Literally means “to call to one’s side, to one’s aid”
 - b. It suggests the capability for giving aid
 - c. Used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, a counsel for the defense
 - d. Generally, it is one who pleads another’s case, an intercessor
2. Jesus is the perfect “advocate”, for He is **righteous**
 - a. As sinners, we are alienated from God - cf. **Isa 59:1-2**
 - b. Since Jesus is without sin, He is a fit representative to come before God on our behalf!
 - c. The author of Hebrews also makes the point that though righteous, He understands our situation perfectly - cf. **He 2:17-18; 4:14-16**

B. “HE HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS...” (2)

1. The word “propitiation” means “an appeasing”
 - a. E.g., the pagans would offer sacrifices to appease their gods
 - b. In the NT, it is God, not man, who offers the appeasing sacrifice - cf. **1 Jn 4:10**
 - c. Through His death on the cross, Jesus is the means by which God can show mercy to the sinner
 - d. This explains how God can be “just” (cf. **1 Jn 1:9**) and still forgive sin
 - e. This wonderful “propitiation” was given to the whole world, but is accessed only by those who believe in Jesus - cf. **1 Jn 2:2; Ro 3:21-26**

CONCLUSION

1. In this first chapter, and even into the second, John makes it clear upon what basis we can have fellowship with God, and enjoy the life that provides fullness of joy
2. To have fellowship with God, we who are Christians must...
 - a. Not walk in darkness, but walk in the light of God’s goodness, righteous, and truth
 - b. Admit that we have sinned, and do sin
 - c. Utilize our “advocate” (Jesus Christ), whom God provides as the “propitiation” for our sins

In **1 Jn 1:9**, John explained how those who are already children of God can appropriate the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus (through confession and prayer).

But how about the alien sinner? - cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16** (faith, repentance, and baptism)

Fellowship With Jesus

1 John 2:3-6

INTRODUCTION

1. A concern of John's first epistle is that we have fellowship with the Father and the Son - **1 Jn 1:3**
2. He began by stressing the basis upon which we may fellowship with **the Father (1 Jn 1:5-2:22)**...
 - a. Walk in the light as He is in the light
 - b. Confess our sins, don't deny that we have sin
 - c. Make use of our "advocate" and "propitiation", Jesus Christ the Righteous
3. But what about fellowship with **the Son**? In our text (**1 Jn 2:3-6**), John now describes how we can "know" that we have fellowship with Jesus Christ

[A key phrase in this passage is "**by this we know...**", found twice (**2:3,5**). In other words, "here is how we can be sure". And John's first point is...]

I. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE "KNOW" HIM (3-5a)

A. HERE IS HOW WE CAN BE SURE WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS...

1. **Identifying the "Him" of this passage**
 - a. Is it God or Jesus? The Father or the Son?
 - b. In light of the context, it is Jesus the Son of God - cf. **1 Jn 2:1-2,6**
 - c. This fits in well with John's aim in this epistle - cf. **1 Jn 1:3**
 - 1) He has described the basis for fellowship with the Father
 - 2) Now he discusses the basis for fellowship with the Son
2. **What it means to "know" Jesus**
 - a. As frequently used by John, the word "know" {ginosko} denotes a knowledge that comes by experience, by sharing experiences in life together
 - b. In this sense, it implies that "fellowship" (sharing, communion) has taken place

B. WE CAN BE SURE, "IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS"...

1. Fellowship with Jesus is dependent upon keeping His teachings - **Jn 14:21-23; 15:10**
2. One who claims to "know" (have fellowship) with Jesus, and does not keep His commandments...
 - a. Is a liar, and the truth is not in him! - **1 Jn 2:4b**
 - b. Is just like the one who claims to have fellowship with the Father while walking in darkness! - cf. **1 Jn 1:6**
3. But the person who keeps the words of Jesus, the "love of God" is perfected in him!
 - a. This "love of God"...
 - 1) Is it God's kind of love? - cf. **1 Jn 3:16-17**
 - 2) Is it God's love for us? - cf. **1 Jn 4:9**
 - 3) Is it our love for God? - cf. **1 Jn 5:2-3**

- Most likely our love for God, for the context concerns keeping the commandments of Jesus
- b. Such love for God is “perfected” (made whole, complete) only when we keep the commandments of His Son! - cf. **Jn 14:15,21,23**

[So we can be sure that we “know” Jesus, that we are in fellowship with Him, and that we have perfected our love for God, **only** if we are keeping the commandments of Jesus! To stress the point even further, John continues by point out...]

II. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ARE “IN” HIM (5b-6)

A. HERE IS HOW WE CAN BE SURE WE ARE ABIDING IN JESUS...

1. The word “in” (**5b**) is parallel to the expression “abides in” (**6a**)
2. “Abiding in Jesus” is described by Jesus Himself as similar to a branch abiding in the vine - cf. **Jn 15:4-5**
 - a. There is a union, or attachment, between the branch and vine
 - b. From this union comes a communion, or sharing
3. So again, we are discussing the idea of having fellowship with Jesus

B. WE CAN BE SURE, IF WE “WALK JUST AS HE WALKED”...

1. The person claiming to “abide in Jesus” (or to have fellowship with Him) should “walk” (live) just as Jesus did!
 - a. For only those who follow His words are truly His disciples - cf. **Jn 8:31**
 - b. And those who are His disciples will become like their Teacher - cf. **Lk 6:40**
 - c. Such is the goal of discipleship, and of God’s scheme of redemption itself! - **Ro 8:29**
2. Understanding and applying this truth should have powerful ramifications in how we live (as illustrated in the novel “In His Steps”, by Charles Sheldon)

CONCLUSION

1. We learn from John, then, that the key to knowing that we have fellowship with Jesus is understanding the difference between “talking” and “walking”...
 - a. Anyone can say that they know Jesus, that they abide in Him
 - b. But those that really know are those who...
 - 1) **Keep** His commandments
 - 2) **Walk** just as He walked
2. Do you know Jesus? Are you in fellowship with Him, wherein is eternal life and fullness of joy?
 - a. Have you kept the commands of Jesus?
 - b. How about His commands concerning faith, repentance and baptism? - cf. **Mt 28:18-19; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38; 22:16**
 - c. How about His commands to observe **all** that He commanded, including those revealed through His apostles? - cf. **Mt 28:20; Ac 2:42; 1 Co 14:37**

How you answer reveals the truth regarding your relationship with God, and your hope for eternal life!

An “Old, Yet New” Commandment

1 John 2:7-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study of 1st John, we have seen thus far...
 - a. That John’s aim is that we may have fellowship with the Father and Son, so our joy may be full - **1 Jn 1:1-4**
 - b. That fellowship with the Father is contingent upon:
 - 1) Walking in the light - **1 Jn 1:5-7**
 - 2) Confessing our sins - **1 Jn 1:8-10**
 - 3) Making use of our “advocate” and “propitiation”, Jesus Christ the Righteous - **1 Jn 2:1-2**
 - c. And that fellowship with the Son (Jesus) depends upon:
 - 1) Keeping His commandments - **1 Jn 2:3-5a**
 - 2) Walking as He walked - **1 Jn 2:5b-6**
 - Otherwise, it is not true that we “abide in Him”, nor truly “know Him”
2. Having stressed the importance of keeping the commandments of Jesus if we are to have fellowship with Him and the Father...
 - a. John proceeds to discuss one commandment in particular - **1 Jn 2:7-11**
 - b. He discusses what can be called “**An Old, Yet New Commandment**”

[Let’s consider first...]

I. THE COMMANDMENT ITSELF

A. IT IS AN “OLD” COMMANDMENT... (8)

1. He does not write about something totally new to them
2. But something they had heard “from the beginning” (i.e., from the beginning of the gospel)

B. IT IS A “NEW” COMMANDMENT... (9)

1. That is, it is ever fresh; though old in time, it is never stale
2. It is a commandment that is ever true in Jesus, and it is true in His disciples
3. It is both true and new because...
 - a. “the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining”
 - b. With the coming of the Messiah (Jesus), light has begun to penetrate the darkness - cf. **Isa 9:2; Mt 4:13-17; Jn 1:4-9; 8:12**

C. IT IS THE COMMAND TO “LOVE ONE ANOTHER”...

1. How do we know this?
 - a. It is implied by **verses 9-11**
 - b. It is stated clearly in **1 Jn 3:11; 4:21**
 - c. This command was “from the beginning” (of the gospel) - **Jn 13:34-34; 15:12,17**
2. What does it mean to “love one another”?

- a. It may be helpful to first review the different Greek words for **love**
 - 1) **storge** - describes love of family
 - 2) **eros** - carnal, sexual love
 - 3) **phileo** - love for dear friends
 - 4) **agape** - active goodwill toward others
- b. It is **agape** love that we are commanded to have in this text
 - 1) It is also the same kind of love commanded in **Jn 13:34-35**
 - 2) It is that concern to meet the needs of others that is best exemplified in the life and death of Jesus - cf. **1 Jn 3:16-17**
- c. Therefore, to “love one another” is to consider the needs of one another, and to actively work toward meeting those needs (i.e., follow Jesus’ example!)

[Having identified what commandment is being discussed, consider what John says about...]

II. THE EFFECT OF NOT KEEPING THIS COMMANDMENT

A. ONE “IS IN DARKNESS”... (9)

1. When a person claims to walk in the light, but hates his brother, he is still in darkness!
2. Indeed, he has always been in darkness!
 - a. Cf. “is in darkness until now”
 - b. Despite what they may claim, they have not yet passed from darkness to light!
 - c. Or as expressed later, they have not yet passed from death to life! - **1 Jn 3:14**

B. ONE “DOES NOT KNOW WHERE HE IS GOING”... (11)

1. He may “think” he has fellowship with God, that he is saved, but he is blind!
2. He fails to realize the absurdity of his claim to know and love God - cf. **1 Jn 4:20**
3. Blinded by darkness (hate), he cannot see that he is on the road to hell!

[Does this not illustrate the importance of keeping this “old, yet new” commandment? Its importance is further illustrated as we consider...]

III. THE EFFECT OF KEEPING THIS COMMANDMENT

A. ONE “ABIDES IN THE LIGHT”... (10a)

1. Meaning that they are in full fellowship with the Father! - cf. **1 Jn 1:7a**
2. And they enjoy the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus! - cf. **1 Jn 1:7b**
- So unless we love one another, fellowship and forgiveness is not possible!

B. “THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR STUMBLING”... (10b)

1. Abiding in the light, he can see clearly as he walks
2. Fellowship with God makes it possible to “know where he is going” (unlike the one who hates his brother and is in darkness)
3. This does not imply sinlessness
 - a. Remember **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. But as one walks in the light (in fellowship with God), he knows what to do when he sins, and in what direction he should be headed - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**

CONCLUSION

1. This “old, yet new” commandment is very important...
 - a. If we are not keeping it, we are still in darkness!
 - b. If we are in darkness...
 - 1) We are not walking in the light!
 - 2) We are not having fellowship with God, and the blood of Jesus does not cleanse us from our sins!
 - 3) We cannot have that “fullness of joy” of which John wrote in **1 Jn 1:4**
2. It is only appropriate, then, to close this lesson with the admonition of John found later in his epistle...

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” - 1 Jn 4:7-8

3. For those not yet Christians, I encourage you to seriously consider the next two verses:

“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. 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 Jn 4:9-10

Jesus is not only the “propitiation” for our sins, but is available for the whole world (**1 Jn 2:2**). Have you appropriated this wonderful offer from God?

Three Stages In The Christian Life

1 John 2:12-14

INTRODUCTION

1. Having charged his readers to observe an “old, yet new” commandment to love one another (**1 Jn 2:7-11**), John takes a moment to specifically address various members of his reading audience - **1 Jn 2:12-14**
2. This section is rhythmical, almost lyrical, and raises a number of questions, such as these listed by Guy N. Woods in his commentary on 1st John...
 - a. Why did John use the present tense, “I write” {**grapho**}, in the first three clauses, and “I have written” {**egrapsa**}, epistolary aorist, in the second three?
 - b. To what writing does he refer in the first instance? In the second?
 - c. What is the meaning of the word “children” in the first clause of each of the divisions?
 - d. Why did he use the word **teknion** in the first reference to children, and **paidion** in the second?
 - e. In what sense is the reference to “fathers, children, young men” to be taken, literal or figurative?
3. Many and various answers have been given to these questions; without going into detail, I believe the following answers to the above questions have merit...
 - a. We have here a simple form of Hebrew parallelism, where the same thing is being said for the sake of emphasis
 - b. In both instances, the writing to which John refers is this very epistle
 - c. Unlike **1 Jn 2:1,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21** where “children” appears to be a term of endearment for all believers, in **2:12,13** “children” seems to refer to a specific class of Christians
 - d. Any distinction between **teknion** and **paidion** is likely not significant, since John uses both as terms of endearment in this epistle when speaking of all believers - cf. **1 Jn 2:18** (**paidion**) with **1 Jn 2:28** (**teknion**)
 - e. Taken literally, the terms “fathers, children, young men” would leave out many Christians (old men, old and younger women); therefore I take the terms to be figurative
4. With this understanding, I believe we find John addressing three basic groups of Christians, who are at different stages in their Christian life

[What we can glean from this section, then, is that there are “**Three Stages Of The Christian Life**”, beginning with...]

I. THE STAGE OF INFANCY

A. IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE “LITTLE CHILDREN”...

1. Both terms used by John normally refer to small infants
 - a. **teknion** {**tek-nee’-on**} - diminutive of tekna; an infant
 - b. **paidion** {**pahee-dee’-on**} -neut. diminutive of pais; a childling (of either sex), i.e. (prop.) an infant, or (by extens.) a half-grown boy or girl (cf. **Mk 5:39-42**)

2. Those who are new Christians, or immature Christians, are thus spoken of as “babes in Christ” - cf. **1 Co 3:1; Ga 4:19; He 5:12-13**
3. This can be a difficult time, in which a Christian...
 - a. Is still more carnal than spiritual - **1 Co 3:1**
 - b. Can be a source of anxiety for those trying to lead them along - **Ga 4:19**
 - c. Needs to focus on the “milk” of the Word - **He 5:12-13**

B. NEW CHRISTIANS CAN TAKE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM JOHN...

1. Because their sins have been forgiven in Christ! - **1 Jn 2:12**
 - a. Forgiveness is not based upon maturity or perfection
 - b. But upon the blood of Jesus, and upon our willingness as Christians to confess our sins - **1 Jn 1:9**
2. Because they have “known the Father” - **1 Jn 2:13**
 - a. I.e., they have fellowship with the Father, which is John’s definition of “eternal life” - **Jn 17:2-3**
 - b. They may be “babes”, but they have “eternal life” in Christ! - cf. **1 Jn 5:11-12**
 - c. And John wants them to continue to believe! - **1 Jn 5:13**

[When a “babe in Christ” feeds upon the milk of the Word, making good use of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, remaining in fellowship with the Father and sharing in “eternal life”, it will not be long before they enter...]

II. THE STAGE OF YOUTH

A. IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE “YOUNG MEN”...

1. As explained previously, I take the expression “young men” figuratively
2. It refers to all, male or female, young or old chronologically, who are “strong in the Lord”
3. I.e., all “who have overcome the wicked one” - **1 Jn 2:13,14**
 - a. Not that they are perfect, or without sin - cf. **1 Jn 1:8**
 - b. But that their faith has had time to be tested, and they have demonstrated that they are truly “born of God” - cf. **1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5**

B. THE SOURCE OF THEIR STRENGTH IS THE WORD OF GOD...

1. Only as the Word of God “abides” (remains) in them are they strong - **1 Jn 2:14**
2. Even as David saw the value of letting the Word of God abide in his heart - **Ps 119:11**
3. For this reason, then, we need to heed the admonition of Peter - cf. **1 Pe 2:2**

[As one demonstrates time and again that they are strong in the Lord, they progress to the final stage of the Christian life...]

III. THE STAGE OF MATURITY

A. IN WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE “FATHERS”...

1. Again, I take the term “fathers” figuratively
2. It likely refers in this passage to Christians, male and female, who have reached the highest stage of the Christian life

3. The term “fathers” suggests...
 - a. They have had experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength)
 - b. They have even produced spiritual offspring, by leading others to Christ - cf. **1 Co 4:14-15**

B. THEY “HAVE KNOWN HIM WHO IS FROM THE BEGINNING”...

1. The reference is likely to Jesus, who “was from the beginning” - **1 Jn 1:1; Jn 1:1-2**
2. Is there a distinction being made by John?
 - a. “Little children” have known “the Father” - **1 Jn 2:13**
 - b. “Fathers” have known “the Son” (who was from the beginning) - **1 Jn 2:13,14**
3. If so, perhaps it is this:
 - a. As babes in Christ, it can be said that even in our infancy we can “know” the Father, that is have an intimate relationship with Him and experience the eternal life which He gives
 - b. But only with time, and with opportunity to “walk just as He walked” (**1 Jn 2:6**), can it be said that one has truly come to “know” Jesus
 - 1) Therefore the admonition of Peter to “grow in the...knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” - **2 Pe 3:18**
 - 2) Which knowledge comes only as we develop the Christ-like graces found in **2 Pe 1:5-8**

CONCLUSION

1. The Christian life has much in harmony with physical life...
 - a. There are definite stages in life
 - b. Only through “growth” does one pass from one stage to the other
 - c. But when growth does not occur, that is a sign of a serious malady!
2. There is a major difference, however...
 - a. Physical growth usually occurs without much effort on our part
 - b. Such is not the case with spiritual growth!
3. These verses that have served as the basis of our text, while they are difficult in many respects, they ought to clearly impress upon our minds several truths...
 - a. There are different stages in the Christian life
 - b. In each stage there are blessings to be enjoyed
 - c. But little children need to become young men, and young men need to become fathers

May God grant us the grace needed to grow as we should, and enjoy the full blessings in each stage of the Christian life!

Love Not The World

1 John 2:15-17

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen that fellowship with God requires that there is no room for hatred in our heart toward our brother:

“He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.” (1 Jn 2:9)

2. But there is one sense in which we are not to have love at all!

“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 Jn 2:15)

3. A very simple imperative is therefore given to us: *“Love not the world...”*
 - a. But do we understand the meaning of this command?
 - b. Do we appreciate the importance of this command?
4. In this study, I hope to...
 - a. Shed some **light** on what John is saying
 - b. Provide some **motivation** to seriously heed what he commands in this passage

[Let’s begin by answering the question **“Why should Christians not love the world?”**]

I. BECAUSE OF WHAT THE WORLD IS (15a,16)

A. THE “WORLD” IN THIS PASSAGE...

1. **It is NOT the “physical world”**
 - a. I.e., God’s creation - **Gen 1:1**
 - b. For it is “very good” - **Gen 1:31**
2. **It is NOT the “human world”**
 - a. I.e., mankind
 - b. Indeed, God Himself loves the world of men - **Jn 3:16**
3. **RATHER, it is the world of “sin”, the world of “evil”!**
 - a. I.e., the “sphere” in which sin, evil, and Satan dominates
 - b. Just as the phrase “the world of sports” describes the domain in which sports dominates, so this “world” is one in which sin dominates

B. THREE THINGS IN PARTICULAR MAKE UP THIS “WORLD”...

1. **“The lust of the flesh”**
 - a. This phrase refers to unbridled desires of the flesh - cf. **Ga 5:19-21**
 - b. Note that these desire can be expressed both:

- 1) Sexually (fornication, adultery, licentiousness)
- 2) Socially (hatred, contentions, jealousies)
2. **“The lust of the eyes”**
 - a. This refers to the unlawful longing for things which we can see
 - b. It can be summed up in one word: “covetousness”
 - c. A modern day expression could be “materialism”
 - d. How serious is this? Consider **Ep 5:5-7; Co 3:5-7**
3. **“The pride of life”**
 - a. This would include pride based upon such things as:
 - 1) Age
 - 2) Experience
 - 3) Ancestry
 - 4) Past accomplishments
 - 5) Money, position, power
 - b. The folly of trusting in such things is seen in **1 Co 1:26-31**

C. A FEW PASSING OBSERVATIONS...

1. **Each of these three things often strike harder at different times in our life:**
 - a. The **young** are most often affected by the “lust of the flesh”
 - b. The **middle-aged** are usually afflicted by the “lust of the eyes”
 - c. The **aged** are likely to be plagued with the “pride of life”
2. **There seems to be a tendency to consider one more serious than the others**
 - a. We seem more concerned about sins involving the “lust of the flesh” than sins in the other categories
 - 1) E.g., which is worse, fornication or covetousness?
 - 2) E.g., which do we consider more serious, adultery or jealousy?
 - b. If we are not careful...
 - 1) While fighting strong against immorality...
 - 2) ...materialism and pride may “sneak in” the back door!

[Whether it be immorality, materialism or pride, it is still part of the “world” we are not to love! But why? We have noticed other passages which say why we shouldn’t (cf. **Ga 5:19-21**), but in our text John gives another reason...]

II. BECAUSE OF WHAT LOVING THE “WORLD” DOES (15b)

A. IT MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO LOVE THE FATHER...

1. **“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**
 - a. I understand “the love of the Father” means “to have love for the Father”
 - b. Instead of “the Father’s love for us”, for He loves us even as sinners - **Ro 5:8**
2. John is not the only person to say that if we love the world, we cannot love God:
 - a. James taught that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” - **Ja 4:4**
 - b. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters - **Mt 6:24**
3. Our sinful pride may rebel against this thought, but we simply are not able to love the world and God at the same time!

B. TO SEE WHY, LET'S DEFINE "THE LOVE OF THE FATHER"...

1. What does it really mean for me to love the Father?
2. According to John, it means that I keep His commandments - cf. **1 Jn 5:3**
3. To this Jesus agrees - **Jn 14:15,21; 15:10**

C. IF WE LOVE THE WORLD, WE CAN'T KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS...!

1. **E.g., if you are driven by "the lust of the flesh"...**
 - a. To commit fornication, adultery, etc.
 - b. Then you can't keep God's command not to defraud your brother - cf. **1 Th 4:3-6**
2. **E.g., if you are overcome by "lust of the eyes"...**
 - a. So that you always want more, and to hold on to what you have
 - b. Then you won't keep God's command to help the needy - cf. **1 Jn 3:16-17**
3. **E.g., if you are filled with "the pride of life"...**
 - a. So that you consider yourself more important than others
 - b. You will not be able to keep the command to imitate Christ - cf. **Ph 2:3-5**

[So it is impossible to faithfully serve God and Jesus, thereby showing our love for them, if we allow ourselves to "love the world"! But John gives us another reason why we should not "love the world"...]

III. BECAUSE OF WHERE THE "WORLD" IS GOING (17)

A. "THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY"...

1. This is true in regards to our individual lives - cf. **1 Pe 1:24; Ja 4:13-14**
2. It is also true concerning everything that we leave behind - cf. **2 Pe 3:10**

B. IN CONTRAST, "HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER"...

1. This is because he will be blessed to enter the heavenly kingdom - **Mt 7:21**
2. Even his "works" will follow with him - **Re 14:13**

CONCLUSION

1. Isn't this what we all want? To one day hear these wonderful words...

*"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."
(Mt 25:21)*

2. Even if we could gain the whole world in this lifetime...
 - a. Is it worth it? - cf. **Mt 16:26**
 - b. Yet most people are selling their soul to the devil and this world for a whole lot less!
3. Let's give serious heed to John's admonition, and make sure that our affection is in the right place: loving the Father by keeping His commandments!

Are you keeping the commandments of God? - cf. **Mt 28:18-20**

Beware Of Antichrists!

1 John 2:18-27

INTRODUCTION

1. With a term of endearment (“little children”) that is a favorite of John’s, he now proceeds to warn them about a problem that was very real in his day...

“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 Jn 2:18)

2. John is the only writer of the New Testament who uses the term “antichrist”, and he uses the term just five times...
 - a. Twice here in **1 Jn 2:18** (“antichrist is coming...many antichrists have come”)
 - b. Again in **1 Jn 2: 22** (“He is antichrist who denies...”)
 - c. Also in **1 Jn 4:3** (“this is the spirit of the antichrist...”)
 - d. And in **2 Jn 7** (“a deceiver and an antichrist.”)
3. The term is commonly used today by many to refer to one individual (“The Antichrist”), who is supposed to appear in the “end times”...
 - a. I.e., some actual person who will arise in the religio-political arena and lead many people astray just before Christ comes again
 - b. This view is held by pre-millennialists and many amillennialists as well
 - c. A connection is usually made to the “man of sin” described by Paul in **2 Th 2:1-11**, and that John possibly has reference to the same individual
4. Whether that is so or not, it is evident that John was more concerned about “antichrists” who have already come; and so we might ask...
 - a. Who were these “antichrists”?
 - b. How were the Christians to avoid being misled by them?
 - c. How can we avoid being misled by antichrists today (whether it be one or many)?

[Let’s begin by...]

I. IDENTIFYING THE “ANTICHRISTS”

A. THEY REFUSE TO FOLLOW APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY... (19)

1. In John’s day...
 - a. They were individuals who had associated with the apostles and other Christians
 - b. But they had gone out on their own, and were no longer in fellowship with the apostles
 - c. Thus it became manifest that they were not “of us” (approved by the apostles)
 - d. Later, John describes the “the spirit of the antichrist” as that which does not hear the apostles (i.e., respect apostolic authority) - cf. **1 Jn 4:3-6**

2. In our day...
 - a. Many “antichrists” behave the same way
 - 1) They may start out acting like they respect apostolic authority, and seek to be with Christians
 - 2) But eventually their true nature comes out and they will not want to be with those who respect apostolic authority very long
 - b. So a sign of “antichrists” is their attitude toward the “apostles’ doctrine” (i.e., the Scriptures)
 - c. Those who reject the apostles, reject Christ himself (cf. **Jn 13:20**), and are thus “antichrist”!

B. THEY DENY JESUS IS THE CHRIST... (22-23)

1. In John’s day...
 - a. They denied that Jesus is the Christ - cf. **1 Jn 2:22a**
 - 1) Many Gnostics alleged that Jesus and Christ were two different persons
 - a) That Christ merely appeared to have flesh, but in reality did not
 - b) Or that the Christ descended upon Jesus at His baptism and departed at the time of His suffering
 - 2) It is this denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh that John identifies as the spirit of the antichrist - **1 Jn 4:3-4**
 - b. They denied the Father and the Son - cf. **1 Jn 2:22b-23**
 - 1) By denying that Jesus is the Christ, they were denying the Son (i.e., He who was “begotten of the Father” and who became flesh)! - cf. **Jn 1:14**
 - 2) By denying the Son, they were in essence also denying the Father! - cf. **Jn 13:20**
2. Today, an “antichrist” would be one...
 - a. Who denies Jesus to be the Messiah
 - b. Who denies the nature of Jesus (that He was fully God and fully man)

[Those who deny apostolic authority, and especially their teaching about the nature of Jesus Christ, manifest the spirit of “antichrist”. How can we guard against being misled by modern-day “antichrists”?]

II. GUARDING AGAINST THE “ANTICHRISTS”

A. JOHN’S INITIAL READERS...

1. Were reminded of their “anointing” - **1 Jn 2:20-21, 27**
 - a. This “anointing from the Holy One”...
 - 1) Enabled them to “know all things”
 - 2) Enabled them “not to need that anyone teach you”
 - b. I understand it to be a reference to the “gifts of the Spirit”...
 - 1) Which in New Testament times served to provide **revelation** and **confirmation** of the truth for the early church
 - 2) So that they could have identified the “antichrists” without John’s help
2. Despite having this “anointing”, they needed to be encouraged to continue in what they had learned (from the Spirit) - **1 Jn 2:24-25**
 - a. Having the “gifts of the Spirit” did not keep them from sinning, or being misled - **1 Jn 2:26**

- b. Only by heeding that which they had heard from the beginning would they continue to abide in the Son and in the Father, and receive the promise of eternal life!

B. CHRISTIANS TODAY...

1. We don't have the "anointing" like John's readers did...
 - a. Though many people today do misapply this verse to teach that we can have some "anointing" from God
 - b. But if we did, then we would not need the Scriptures (cf. **1 Jn 2:20,27**), and only the self-deceived would make such a claim today!
2. However, we have something just as good!
 - a. That is, the Word of God, which is the "sword of the Spirit" - cf. **Ep 6:17**
 - b. We have "the faith once delivered unto the saints" - cf. **Ju 3**
 - c. I.e., an objective standard by which we can know the truth, and avoid being misled by subjective feelings that can be mistaken for some sort of prompting of the Spirit
 - d. With the Scriptures, we have all we need to know God's will - cf. **2 Ti 3:16-17**
3. But like John's readers, we need to be encouraged to continue in what we have learned from the Spirit-given Word...
 - a. Having the Word of God does not ensure that we won't be misled by others
 - b. For unless we study and apply the Word, we are open to deceptions by modern-day "antichrists"!

CONCLUSION

1. "**Antichrists**" are a very real problem for us today:
 - a. For while there may not be many professing Christians who deny Jesus is the Christ, or that He came in the flesh...
 - b. ...there are many who reject the authority of the apostles by the manner in which they disregard the Scriptures!
 - c. The solution then...remains the same for us: "***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 Jn 2:24)
2. As an impetus to heed the words of John, remember what he said was the significance of these "antichrists": "***...by which we know it is the last hour***"
 - a. John knew that in the scheme of God's redemption Jesus could return at any time!
 - b. The fact that it has been 1900 years since John penned these words does not detract from their truthfulness (for chronological time is meaningless to God - cf. **2 Pe 3:8-9**)
 - c. We are living, therefore, in "the last hour", and Christ may come in judgment at any time!

Are we ready for His coming?

Having Confidence At Christ's Coming

1 John 2:28-29

INTRODUCTION

1. The time is coming when we shall have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ...
 - a. God has ordained Christ to be the judge of the world - **Jn 5:22, 26-27; Ac 17:30-31**
 - b. Therefore we must all appear before Christ - **2 Co 5:10**
2. Many people, if they think of the Day of Judgment at all, do so with great apprehension...
 - a. For some, it is probably for good reason they fear that Day, for they know their lives are not right with God
 - b. But there are some who fear the coming of that Day, who really shouldn't, but can look forward to that day knowing they will stand before Him with great boldness!
3. Indeed, John wrote his first epistle with the desire to help his readers understand that they can have confidence before the Lord when He comes...

“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 Jn 2:28)

4. In this study, I would like for us to take a close look at...
 - a. John's **goal** for his “little children”
 - b. John's **solution** for obtaining this goal

[We begin, then, by determining...]

I. JOHN'S GOAL FOR HIS “LITTLE CHILDREN”

A. TO HAVE “CONFIDENCE” WHEN CHRIST APPEARS...

1. The word for “confidence” is **parrhesia**, {**par-rhay-see'-ah**}
 - a. It means “all outspokenness, i.e. frankness, bluntness, publicity; by impl. assurance: -- bold, confidence”
 - b. It is used elsewhere to describe:
 - 1) The boldness of Peter and John before the council - **Ac 4:13**
 - 2) The boldness of Paul's preaching - **Ac 9:27**
2. Even now, in Christ we can have...
 - a. “...boldness and access with confidence” to God - **Ep 3:12**
 - b. Bold access to the throne of God for mercy and grace to help - **He 4:14-16**
3. Therefore it is John's goal that we have the same sort of “boldness” and “confidence” at Christ's appearing that we have now!
 - a. Just as we can now boldly approach God's throne of grace...
 - b. ...so we can then stand with confidence before Christ's throne of judgment!

B. TO NOT BE “ASHAMED” WHEN HE COMES...

1. The word here is **aischunomai {ahee-skho'-nom-ahee}**
 - a. Which is from **aischos** (disfigurement, i.e. disgrace); to feel shame (for oneself): -- be ashamed
 - b. It is used to describe the unjust steward's attitude toward begging - **Lk 16:3**
2. To be “ashamed”, then, is the opposite of having “boldness” and “confidence”
3. John does not want us to be ashamed of ourselves when Christ comes again!

[To stand before Jesus at His coming, with confidence and no shame, that is John's goal for his “little children”! Is that not the goal for ourselves as well? How can we be sure that will be true of us? Consider...]

II. JOHN'S SOLUTION FOR OBTAINING THIS GOAL

A. “ABIDE IN HIM”...

1. Here is the key to having “confidence” at Christ's appearing
2. This is the answer if we do not want to be “ashamed” at His coming
-- But how does one “abide in Christ”?

B. ABIDING IN CHRIST...

1. Involves letting His Word abide in us
 - a. As John stated earlier - **1 Jn 2:24**
 - b. And as explained by Jesus Himself - **Jn 14:21,23; 15:10**
2. Letting His Word abide in us therefore involves two important concepts:
 - a. That we **know** His Word
 - b. That we **keep** His Word
3. I am persuaded that the lack of confidence many Christians have is the result of not knowing the words of Jesus...
 - a. It is akin to the apprehension many feel before taking a test
 - 1) Not having properly studied the material, naturally they don't know it very well
 - 2) Whereas one who has mastered the material has confidence going into the test
 - b. When brethren do not read and study God's word, the Bible, it is understandable why they would be apprehensive about being judged by it!
 - c. But the solution to not knowing God's Word, and those of His Son, is a simple one:
read!
4. It is not enough, though, to “know”, we must also “keep” His Word...
 - a. We must be “doers” of the Word - cf. **Mt 7:21, 24-27**
 - b. Only the one who “practices righteousness” is truly born of God and abiding in Jesus
- cf. **1 Jn 2:29**
 - c. But if you know what Jesus has actually taught, it is not that “hard” to do what He says!
- cf. **1 Jn 5:3**
 - d. Add to this the promise of the cleansing power of Jesus' blood when we sin (**1 Jn 1:9**), we have every reason to have “confidence”!

CONCLUSION

1. The story is told about a conversation between two little boys...

One of the boys noticed that the other's grandmother spent a lot of time reading her Bible. "Why does she read the Bible so much?" the boy asked his friend. The other boy replied, "She is cramming for her final exam!"

2. The more we **know**, and the more we **keep** the words of our Lord, the greater our confidence that we shall stand before our Lord on that great Day of Judgment with all boldness!
3. As John says, "**Abide in Him**," which we have seen occurs when we follow his earlier admonition:

"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 Jn 2:24)

Are you letting the Word of God abide in you, so that you are truly abiding in the Son and in the Father?

The Children Of God

1 John 3:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. In **1 Jn 2:29**, for the first time John speaks of Christians as those who are “born” of God...
 - a. It is an expression that will be used time and again throughout the remainder of this epistle - **1 Jn 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18**
 - b. It is a figurative expression, emphasizing that the Christian’s spiritual life is a result of the redemptive work of God - cf. **Co 2:12-13; Ti 3:4-7**
 - c. As a result of this working of God in our lives, we have been “born again”, and can therefore be properly called God’s “children”
2. That we can be called “children of God” was amazing to John, and in our text (**1 Jn 3:1-3**) he desires that we reflect...
 - a. Upon the significance of being called the “children of God”
 - b. Upon the implications of what it should mean in our lives

[As we take the opportunity to reflect upon such things, we first notice that this passage reminds us of...]

I. WHAT WE ARE AS CHILDREN OF GOD (1)

A. WE ARE RECIPIENTS OF GOD’S LOVE...

1. *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”*
2. It is through the love of God that we can even become His children - **Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8; 1 Jn 4:9-10; Ti 3:3-7**
3. It is an honor for God to even take notice of us as one of His creatures (cf. **Psa 8:3-4**), how much love God must have to allow us to become His children!

B. WE ARE UNKNOWN BY THE WORLD...

1. *“...the world does not know us...”*
2. That is, they do not truly recognize or appreciate what we have become in Christ
3. They may even deem us as religious fanatics, fools - cf. **1 Co 4:9-13**
4. But this is understandable...
 - a. For the world did not (and still does not) really know Jesus - **Jn 1:11**
 - b. And for now, our lives are “hidden” in Jesus - **Co 3:3-4**

[Loved and honored by God, unknown and sometimes despised by the world; that is what we are today as the children of God. But as stated by Paul in **Co 3:4**, when Christ comes we will “appear with Him in glory”! This speaks of our condition in the future, and John also writes of our future condition...]

II. WHAT WE SHALL BE AS CHILDREN OF GOD (2)

A. IT HAS NOT YET BEEN FULLY REVEALED...

1. Exactly what we shall be like has not yet been revealed
2. Which may be that due to our finite capability to comprehend
3. In general terms we have been promised a spiritual body and immortality - cf. **1 Co 15:42-44,50-53**
4. But there is something else, hinted at by both Paul and John...

B. WE SHALL BE LIKE JESUS...

1. “...we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”
2. Paul also says that we will be like Jesus when He comes...
 - a. We shall bear the image of the “heavenly Man” - cf. **1 Co 15:49**
 - b. Our lowly bodies will undergo a wonderful transformation to become like Jesus - **Ph 3:20-21**
3. Though we cannot fully know what we will be like, it must really be something, for as Christ is now, no man can really see Him and live! - cf. **1 Ti 6:13-16**

[This wonderful hope of what we will be some day should encourage us to “stand fast in the Lord” (cf. **Ph 3:20-4:1**). John also has something to say as to how this hope ought to influence how we live, as he describes...]

III. WHAT WE SHOULD BE AS CHILDREN OF GOD (3)

A. OUGHT TO BE MOTIVATED BY OUR HOPE...

1. “everyone who has this hope...”
2. The hope of which John writes, of course, is the earnest expectation that we will be like Jesus when He comes

B. DILIGENTLY INVOLVED IN PURIFYING ONE’S SELF...

1. The Greek word for “purify” is **hagnizo** which means “to make clean, i.e. (fig.) sanctify”
 - a. It is closely related to the word for “holiness”, which in Greek is **hagiasmos**, meaning “holiness, sanctification”
 - b. It therefore involves the idea of being “set apart” for a holy purpose, which Christians are taught to pursue - cf. **He 12:14**
2. Properly motivated by the hope that Jesus will “transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (**Ph 3:21**), the true child of God will work toward the purity (holiness) seen in the Lord Himself
3. How can Christians purify themselves?
 - a. First and foremost by appropriating the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus! - cf. **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. Only then can we hope to be truly holy and without blemish - cf. **Ep 5:25-27**
 - c. But we also have an obligation to remove ourselves from things that would defile us - cf. **2 Co 6:16-7:1**

CONCLUSION

1. By virtue of God’s love for us, and His working in us, we can truly be called the “children of God”!

2. However, to become a child of God, and truly remain such, we must be willing to cooperate with God...
 - a. When our faith joins with the working of God, we can become His children! - cf. **Co 2:12-13; Ga 3:26-27**
 - b. As long as our faith remains strong, we have the assurance of receiving the promises God has made - cf. **He 3:12-14; 4:1-2; 10:35-39; Re 2:10**

May the love our heavenly Father has shown in making us His children, serve to motivate us to remain faithful to Him!

Sin And The Child Of God

1 John 3:4-9

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study (“**The Children Of God**”), we saw that the true child of God purifies himself because of the hope of seeing Jesus on day - cf. **1 Jn 3:2-3**
2. In discussing “purity”, the subject of “sin” naturally arises...
 - a. Which may be why John moves right into a discussion of “**Sin And The Child of God**” - **1 Jn 3:4-9** (read)
 - b. It also fits into John’s overall theme of combating the Gnostic-like influences that were teaching that sinning did not affect one’s relationship with God
3. How shall the true child of God regard sin? Is it something to be taken lightly? Not if the apostle John has anything to say about it!

[Using **verses 4-9** as our text, then, let’s consider what John has to say about “**Sin And The Child Of God**”. We begin by noticing...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF SIN (4)

A. AS UNDERSTOOD BY SOME...

1. Sin is nothing more than a violation of human relationships
2. Which can be easily resolved by correcting relationship problems
- While **some** sins may be a violation of “human” relationships, the true meaning of sin goes much farther than that

B. THE LITERAL MEANING OF THE WORD “SIN”...

1. The Greek word for “sin” is **hamartia**, and it literally means “to miss the mark”
2. E.g., as when an archer fails to hit the center of the target
3. So “sin” is some kind of action (or lack of it) in which one fails to meet the goal intended by God - cf. **Ro 3:23**

C. AS DEFINED BY JOHN...

1. Sin is “lawlessness” (NKJV), or “transgression of the law” (KJV)
2. The word for lawlessness (transgression) is **anomia**, which means “illegality, i.e. violation of law”
 - a. I.e., to break or violate a law, such as the law of God
 - b. E.g., to steal when the law says “Thou shalt not steal”
3. So sin occurs when you do what is forbidden (commonly called “**a sin of commission**”)

D. AS DEFINED BY JAMES...

1. James describes another kind of sin - cf. **Ja 4:17**

2. So sin is also committed when you fail to do what is good or commanded (often called “**a sin of omission**”)
 - a. E.g., failing to love your brother
 - b. While you may not do ill toward your brother, failure to do good is just as much a sin!

E. IN BOTH OF THESE DEFINITIONS OF SIN...

1. One has failed to meet a certain standard (they have “missed the mark”)
2. In this case, the standard is the “law of God”
 - a. Which, when carefully noted, is designed to help us in our relationships with...
 - 1) God
 - 2) Other people
 - 3) Even self
 - b. Every command of God, both negative and positive, affect these relationships in one way or the other

[Failure to understand the true nature of “sin” is one reason why there is so much apathy toward it today. But every time we sin, we are adversely affecting our relationship with either God, others, or our own selves! Further insight into the terribleness of sin is gained by considering what John says about...]

II. THE ORIGIN OF SIN (8a)

A. SIN IS OF THE DEVIL...!

1. “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.”
2. This statement of John is reminiscent of one made by Jesus in **Jn 8:44**
3. From the beginning the devil has been the “father” or origin of sin (“he is a liar and the father of it”)

B. THOSE WHO SIN ARE OF THE DEVIL...!

1. Since he is the “father” of sin, those who practice sin are his children
2. “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do” - cf. **Jn 8:44a**
3. So when we “miss the mark” by either...
 - a. Doing what is forbidden
 - b. Failing to do what is commanded...we demonstrate the influences of the devil in our lives!

[If sin can make one to be “the children of the devil”, that ought to tell us something about the terribleness of sin! But there is something else that describes sin’s terribleness, and that is seen as we consider what John says about...]

III. THE DEFEAT OF SIN (5a, 8b)

A. THIS WAS THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S COMING...

1. “He was manifested to take away our sins” - **1 Jn 3:5a**
2. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” - **1 Jn 3:8b**

3. As John the Baptist declared: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” - **Jn 1:29**
- To continue to walk in sin, therefore, is to undermine the purpose of our Lord’s coming!

B. CONSIDER WHAT IT COST JESUS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS PURPOSE...

1. Nothing less than His own death! - cf. **1 Co 15:3**
2. Nothing less than His precious blood! - cf. **Ac 20:28; 1 Pe 1:18-19**
- Does not this tell us something about the terribleness of sin?

[When we properly understand what sin is, and how terrible it must be in God’s sight, then for the “child of God” there can only be one goal: what John describes as...]

IV. THE REFRAINMENT OF SIN (6-7, 9)

A. WHOEVER “ABIDES IN HIM” DOES NOT SIN... (6)

1. The phrase “does not sin” is present tense in the Greek, suggesting a practice of not sinning
 - a. John has already affirmed that Christians sin - cf. **Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. To say we have no sin is to lie, and to make God a liar
 - c. So John is talking about one who does not “continuously practice sin”
2. Such is true of those who “abide in Him”
 - a. Those who “abide in Jesus” do not continuously engage in sin
 - b. That is because they...
 - 1) Let that which they have heard from the beginning abide in them (i.e., the words of Jesus) - cf. **1 Jn 2:24**
 - 2) Strive to walk even as Jesus walked - cf. **1 Jn 2:6**
3. But the one who continuously practices sin has neither seen Jesus nor known him (despite any claims to the contrary!)

B. WHOEVER “HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD” DOES NOT SIN... (9)

1. Again, John uses the present tense when he says “does not sin”
 - a. He is not suggesting that one “born of God” never sins
 - b. But that one truly “born of God” does not continuously practice sin
2. And why is that? Because “His seed remains in Him”
 - a. The “seed” is that life-giving principle that makes one a child of God
 - b. Which clearly involves the Word of God - cf. **Ja 1:18; 1 Pe 1:22-23**
3. As long as one allows the “seed” (the Word of God) to remain in him, he is “born of God”
 - a. As such he does not continuously practice sin
 - b. Nor can he continuously practice sin, if the “seed” is remaining in him
 - c. Instead, he continuously practices righteousness! - **1 Jn 3:7**

CONCLUSION

1. Again, it helpful to remember that John is dealing with precursors to Gnosticism, and the idea that one can claim to be “born of God” and not be concerned about sin in their life
2. But when we are aware of:

- a. The **definition** of sin
- b. The **origin** of sin
- c. The **defeat** of sin
- d. The **refrainment** of sin

...our attitude toward sin will certainly be different than those John was having to combat!

3. What is your attitude toward sin?
 - a. Have you been born again through obedience to the Word of God (the incorruptible seed)?
 - b. Are you letting that “seed” remain in you so that you do not continuously practice sin?

How you answer can reveal whose “child” you really are!

The Necessity Of Brotherly Love

1 John 3:10-15

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study (“**Sin And The Child Of God**”), we saw where John described two different kinds of people...
 - a. One who continuously practices sin, and is therefore “of the devil” - **1 Jn 3:8a**
 - b. One “born of God,” who does not continuously practice sin - **1 Jn 3:9**
2. John continues to illustrate the contrast between “the children of God” and “the children of the devil” in **1 Jn 3:10**, presenting two criteria which distinguishes them:
 - a. Practicing righteousness
 - b. Brotherly love
3. Both of these “criteria” have already been introduced earlier in this epistle...
 - a. John enjoined “brotherly love” as necessary to “abiding in the light” - **1 Jn 2:9-11**
 - b. He connected “practicing righteousness” to being “born of Him” - **1 Jn 2:29; 3:7**
4. It is primarily the subject of “brotherly love” that John expounds upon throughout the rest of this epistle, including that which serves as our text for this study - **1 Jn 3:10-15**

[In these verses, John describes “**The Necessity Of Brotherly Love**”, giving us two main reasons why we **must** love one another. The first of which is...]

I. IT DISTINGUISHES THE CHILDREN OF GOD (10-13)

A. TWO THINGS “MANIFEST” THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD’S CHILDREN AND THE DEVIL’S CHILDREN... (10)

1. The word “**manifest**” means:
 - a. To show or demonstrate plainly; reveal
 - b. To be evidence of; prove
2. That which clearly demonstrates **the children of God** are:
 - a. The practice of righteousness
 - b. The love of the brethren
3. Whereas those who are **the children of the devil** are clearly revealed when they:
 - a. Do not practice righteousness
 - b. Do not have brotherly love

B. THE COMMAND TO LOVE IS “FROM THE BEGINNING”... (11)

1. I.e., from the beginning of the gospel, spoken by Jesus Himself - cf. **Jn 13:34-35**
2. Note that Jesus also stressed how loving one another would make the children of God (His disciples) “manifest” to the world: “...by this all will know” - **Jn 13:35**

C. EXPECT SOME CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE TWO “CHILDREN”... (12-13)

1. Just as Cain killed his brother Abel
 - a. He who was of the wicked one killed his brother
 - b. The murder was sparked by the contrast between the works of the two
2. So don't be surprised if the world hates you as well - cf. also **Jn 15:18-20**

[When we follow the teachings of Jesus, especially His command to love one another, it soon become evident (“manifest”) that we are different from those of the world. But that difference sometimes leads to jealousy and its unpleasant consequences. What imperative is there, then, to heed a command that makes us stand out so? Well, as John continues...]

II. IT SIGNIFIES A PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE (14-15)

A. IT IS A MARK OF TRUE CONVERSION... (14a)

1. Certainly brotherly love is not the **only** indicator
2. Remember that we must also practice righteousness - cf. **Ga 5:22-23**
3. But love for the brethren is a positive sign that true conversion has occurred

B. WHEREAS LACK OF LOVE IS AN OMINOUS SIGN... (14b-15)

1. That one “abides in death”
2. As we saw earlier, one who hates his brother “is in darkness until now” - **1 Jn 2:9,11**
3. Indeed, hating one's brother makes one a murderer! (just like Cain)
4. And it should be self-evident that a murderer does not possess eternal life!

C. WHEN CHRISTIANS DO NOT LOVE THEIR BRETHERN...

1. It **may** be an indication that true conversion never occurred, and that they are Christians in name only
2. It **may** be that there was true conversion...
 - a. But the Christian is still a “babe in Christ” - cf. **1 Co 3:1-3**
 - b. Or that what the writer of Hebrews feared has occurred - cf. **He 3:12-14**
3. In **any** circumstance, it is not what God desires for us!

CONCLUSION

1. Two compelling reasons are therefore given by John for why we should love one another:
 - a. It distinguishes the children of God
 - b. It signifies a passing from death to life
2. John will have more to say about love and its value, but may these two reasons compel us to examine our hearts and our attitudes toward our brethren!

“Let brotherly love continue.” (He 13:1)

The Definition And Value Of Brotherly Love

1 John 3:16-24

INTRODUCTION

1. John has given us two reasons in **1 Jn 3:10-15** for why it is necessary that we love the brethren...
 - a. Along with practicing righteousness, it distinguishes the children of God
 - b. It signifies a passing from death to life
2. But what does it really mean to love the brethren? And what benefits do we receive in return when we possess brotherly love?
3. These two questions are answered by John in **1 Jn 3:16-24**, which serves as the text of this lesson entitled **“The Definition And Value Of Brotherly Love”**

[Beginning in **verse 16**, we find...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (16-18)

A. JESUS EXEMPLIFIES WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE THE BRETHREN... (16)

1. The word for love (Grk., agape), has often been described as “active goodwill”
2. In giving His life for our sins, Jesus certainly demonstrated goodwill in an active way
3. By meditating upon His example, we are “taught of God to love one another” - cf. **1 Th 4:9**
4. With Jesus’ example, then, we come to understand what brotherly love is all about: sacrificially serving others!
 - a. Therefore we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another
 - b. It may involve “dying” for our brethren; it can also be “living” for them through serving

B. AN EXAMPLE OF FAILING TO SHOW BROTHERLY LOVE... (17)

1. John uses the example of not helping a brother when it is within your power to do so
2. In view of Christ’s love, can we claim to have love if we are not willing to sacrifice for a brother in need?
3. This illustrates that brotherly love is not only being willing to “die” for someone, but willing to “live” for them as well, through active service on their behalf

C. THEREFORE, AN ADMONITION TO “TRUE LOVE”... (18)

1. An admonition prefaced by John’s favorite term of endearment: “My little children”
2. To love, not just in words, but truly, through deeds!

[We see, then, that “brotherly love” which 1) distinguishes the children of God, and 2) signifies one as having passed from death to life, must go beyond the spoken word or occasional hymn. Patterned after the example of Jesus, “brotherly love” is manifested by what one does, not just by what one says (cf. **1 Co 13:4-8**). The blessedness of such love is not only for the recipient, but also for the giver, as we learn beginning in **verse 19**...]

II. THE VALUE OF BROTHERLY LOVE (19-24)

A. IT GIVES ONE ASSURANCE BEFORE GOD... (19-21)

1. Love of the brethren is an indication that one is “of the truth”, just as it was an indication that one had passed from death to life (**1 Jn 3:14**)
2. It is certainly not the only indicator (cf. **1 Jn 3:10**), but it does help to provide one with assurance of their salvation
3. The importance of such assurance
 - a. If our own hearts condemn us...
 - 1) Because we know we do not love the brethren as we ought
 - 2) Certainly God, who is greater and knows all things, will know of our shortcomings in this area (**“If conscience condemn us in known sin, or the neglect of known duty, God does so too.”** - Matthew Henry)
 - b. But if our hearts **do not** condemn us...
 - 1) Because we are loving the brethren as we know we should
 - 2) This will make us able to approach God with joyful confidence!

B. IT LEADS TO POSITIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER... (22-23)

1. Our prayers are more likely to be answered according to our requests
2. Because we are keeping the commandments of God (of which loving the brethren is one), and thereby pleasing Him
3. “Commandment-keeping” is a condition upon which God hears prayer, just as it is a condition upon which Christ promises His abiding love - **Jn 15:10**

C. IT ENSURES THAT ONE ABIDES IN CHRIST... (24)

1. Abiding in Christ is contingent upon keeping His commandments (and loving the brethren is certainly one of His commandments) - cf. **Jn 14:23**
2. And how do we know that Christ truly abides in those who keeps His commandments?
 - a. By the Spirit whom Christ has given
 - b. He (the Spirit) reminded the apostles of the key to abiding in Christ - cf. **Jn 14:19-26**

CONCLUSION

1. Aren't these three blessings what every true Christian desires...?
 - a. Abiding in Christ, and He in us?
 - b. God answering our prayers?
 - c. Confidence concerning our standing before God?
2. For these blessings to be ours...
 - a. We must allow Christ to teach us by His example what it really means to have “brotherly love”
 - b. And then manifest such sacrificial service in our lives!

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Does the love of God abide in you?

Test The Spirits!

1 John 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION

1. So far in this epistle, John has discussed what our relationship should be (or not be) in regards to:
 - a. God - **1 Jn 1:5-6**
 - b. Jesus - **1 Jn 2:3-4**
 - c. The things in the world - **1 Jn 2:15**
 - d. Sin - **1 Jn 3:4-5**
 - e. Our brethren - **1 Jn 3:11**

2. As chapter four begins, we find John exhorting us concerning a very real danger: false prophets!
- cf. **1 Jn 4:1-6**

[With another term of endearment (“beloved”), then, John exhorts his brethren to...]

I. TEST THE SPIRITS! (1)

A. “DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT...”

1. I.e., don’t believe everything you hear, or everyone who claims to be from God
2. How foolish it would be to do so should be obvious...
 - a. We would be in a constant state of confusion (believing one thing one moment, and another thing the next)
 - b. We would be easily misled by those teaching error

B. “TEST THE SPIRITS, WHETHER THEY ARE OF GOD...”

1. The word “**test**” (“try”, KJV) means...
 - a. To examine, prove scrutinize (Thayer)
 - b. To see whether a thing is genuine or not
2. So don’t just accept what some teacher or preacher is saying; examine what is being taught
3. Those who have this attitude are highly commended in the Scriptures
 - a. The Bereans - **Ac 17:11**
 - b. The Ephesians - **Re 2:2**

C. “BECAUSE MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD...”

1. This is the reason we must “test the spirits”
2. Others have also warned us of this fact...
 - a. Jesus - **Mt 7:15**
 - b. Peter - **2 Pe 2:1-3**
 - c. Paul - **2 Co 11:13-15**
3. So we must examine, prove, and scrutinize those who would teach us!
 - a. Even though some teachers might consider it insubordinate
 - b. Even though some might not like the possible controversy it may cause

4. When one teaches in our classes, pulpits, radio, newspapers, etc., we must “test the spirits!”

[But **how** shall we test the spirits? In our text, John shares with us several tests...]

II. THE TESTS (2-3, 6)

A. DO THEY CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH...?

1. **Verses 2-3** are best understood in light of the Gnostic-like errors that were prevalent at that time...
 - a. In which some denied Jesus Christ actually came in the flesh - cf. **2 Jn 7**
 - b. Whose doctrine was leading many astray, possibly because the false teachers claimed inspiration by the Spirit
2. But those who would teach such falsehood are not led by the Spirit of God, but possess the spirit of the Antichrist! - again cf. **2 Jn 7**

B. DO THEY LISTEN TO THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST...?

1. **Verse 6** reveals how we can distinguish between “the spirit of truth” and “the spirit of error”
 - a. Those who truly know God listens to the apostles
 - b. Those who are not of God will reject them
2. I.e., does the teaching agree with what the apostles teach?
 - a. For Jesus taught that to receive them was to receive Him and God - **Jn 13:20**
 - b. Thus the early church continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine - **Ac 2:42**
 - c. For they recognized their words as the commands of the Lord - **1 Co 14:37**
 - d. And even the apostles recognized their fellow-apostles’ writings as equivalent to inspired scriptures - e.g., **2 Pe 3:15-16**
-- Therefore, those who are God will heed the apostles, and agree with their teaching!
3. This is a test that we can easily apply today on virtually every issue!
 - a. But it implies knowledge and understanding of the apostles’ doctrine on our part
 - b. Yet that should not be a problem if we follow the example of the first church in Jerusalem - cf. **Ac 2:42**

C. THOUGH NOT MENTIONED BY JOHN, HERE ARE TWO MORE “TESTS”...

1. The test of **Deu 18:21-22**
 - a. To be used when a person claims to be a prophet of God
 - b. If their prophecy fails, they are shown to be a false prophet
2. The test of **Deu 13:1-4**
 - a. To be used when wonders are performed, and prophecies seem to be fulfilled
 - b. If their doctrine contradicts what God has already revealed, they are to be rejected (this is akin to what John wrote)

CONCLUSION

1. In the midst of these warnings to “test the spirits”, John provides comforting words in **verses 4-5**
 - a. By being of God (because they have heeded the words of His apostles)...
 - 1) They can overcome the false prophets
 - 2) For the One in them is greater than he (Satan?) who is in the world

- b. Don't be surprised to see the world following after the false prophets...
 - 1) For the false prophets are of the world and speak in a way as to appeal to the world
 - 2) Therefore don't be deterred by the "apparent success" of the false teachers (size and numbers is not a proper measure of truth!)
- 2. In view of the proliferation of religions and various doctrines bombarding us today, all in the name of Christ and the Spirit of God, the exhortation of John is very relevant and important for us:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God”

Are you continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine so you can properly apply the test?

An Exposition On Brotherly Love

1 John 4:7-21

INTRODUCTION

1. Who is best known as “the apostle of love”?
 - a. The apostle Paul is certainly worthy of such an appellation in view of his discourse on love in **1 Co 13:1-13**
 - b. But because of the many references to love in his first epistle, John has come to be known as “the apostle of love”
2. We have already seen where John declared that love is evidence of...
 - a. Abiding in the light, i.e., having fellowship with God - **1 Jn 2:10; cf. 1:5-7**
 - b. Being children of God - **1 Jn 3:10,14**
3. And we have already seen where John has touched upon...
 - a. The definition of love - **1 Jn 3:16**
 - b. The value of love - **1 Jn 3:18-19**
4. But now, in the passage which serves as the text for our study, John expounds upon the theme of brotherly love in much greater depth - **1 Jn 4:7-21**

[In “**An Exposition On Brotherly Love**”, John begins by reminding us that...]

I. BROTHERLY LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF SONSHIP (7-8)

A. WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS OF GOD...

1. As will be illustrated shortly, true love (the Greek word is agape, “active goodwill”) emanates from God - **7a**
2. That is because “God is love” - **8b**
 - a. Every action of His is motivated out of an “active goodwill” toward us
 - b. This does not mean He overlooks sin, for God is also “light” - cf. **1 Jn 1:5-6**

B. THOSE WHO LOVE, DEMONSTRATE THEIR SONSHIP...

1. They demonstrate that they are “born of God” and “know God” - **7b**
2. But if one does not love as God does, then they have not yet come to truly know God - **8a**

[But lest any misconstrue the kind of love being discussed, he expands upon the definition of true love mentioned earlier in **1 Jn 3:16...**]

II. BROTHERLY LOVE IS DEFINED BY GOD’S LOVE (9-11)

A. GOD MANIFESTED HIS LOVE THROUGH THE GIFT OF HIS SON...

1. He sent His “only begotten Son” - **9; cf. Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18**

2. He sent His Son, not because we loved Him, but because He loved us - **10; cf. Ro 5:8**
3. He sent His Son for two reasons:
 - a. That we might live through Him - **9; Jn 10:10**
 - b. That He might be the propitiation (an appeasing sacrifice) for our sins - **10**
-- Jesus died not just to provide forgiveness, but also to provide new life!

B. THIS IS THE KIND OF LOVE WE SHOULD HAVE...

1. If this is kind of love God has had toward us...
 - a. I.e., active goodwill
 - b. I.e., manifested unconditionally (to a certain extent, of course)
2. Then this is the kind of love we should have toward one another!
 - a. Where we love, not because we are loved first
 - b. But as God is love, so we are to be as His children! - cf. **Lk 6:35**

[With “brotherly love” defined properly, John continues to point out that...]

III. BROTHERLY LOVE IS EVIDENCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (12-16)

A. THROUGH BROTHERLY LOVE, GOD’S ABIDING IS POSSIBLE...

1. No one has seen God at any time - **12a; cf. Jn 1:18**
2. However, when we keep the command to love one another, God will abide in us, and His love will be perfected in us! - **12b; cf. 1 Jn 3:24a**
3. We know this is true because of the Spirit which God has given - **13; cf. 1 Jn 3:24b**
 - a. The Spirit was to remind the apostles of all that Jesus taught - **Jn 14:26**
 - b. This included Jesus’ teaching on how the Father and the Son would abide in them (i.e., through keeping the commandments) - **Jn 14:21,23**

B. THIS IS NOT THE ONLY NECESSARY REQUIREMENT FOR GOD TO ABIDE IN US, BUT IT IS AN ESSENTIAL ONE...

1. The apostles have testified that Father sent the Son to be our Savior - **14**
2. And so we must be willing to confess Jesus as the Son of God - **15**
3. Then, when we have known and believed the love God has for us (manifested in the sending of His Son), we are in a position to fully accept two basic principles of the gospel:
 - a. God is love
 - b. He who abides in love abides in God and God in him - **16**

[In the next section of this “exposition on brotherly love”, John touches again on a theme mention back in **1 Jn 3:19-21...**]

IV. BROTHERLY LOVE PROVIDES ASSURANCE (17-19)

A. WHEN BROTHERLY LOVE IS PERFECTED, WE CAN HAVE BOLDNESS...

1. As we grow and become more complete and mature in brotherly love, we will be able to have boldness in the day of judgment - **17a**
2. The boldness will come from knowing that as His children we were like Him in this world - **17b**

B. AS BROTHERLY LOVE IS PERFECTED, FEAR IS DISPELLED...

1. Because the prospects of torment naturally produce fear, the more we grow in God's love, to that degree fear is dispersed - **18a**
2. If we fear the day of judgment, that is an indication we need to grow in love! - **18b**
3. Growing in love is made so easy for us, however, because God first loved us! - **19**

[Finally, John ends this "exposition on brotherly love" by proving...]

V. BROTHERLY LOVE IS ESSENTIAL TO LOVING GOD (20-21)

A. TO CLAIM TO LOVE GOD AND STILL HATE ONE'S BROTHER IS A LIE...

1. Like those who claim...
 - a. To have fellowship with God while they walk in darkness - **1 Jn 1:6**
 - b. To not have sinned - **1 Jn 1:10**
 - c. To know Jesus while not keeping His commandments - **1 Jn 2:4**
...so is one who claims to love God while hating his brother: John says that they are all liars!
- **20a**
2. For to love one whom we cannot see (God) requires that we first be able to love those whom we can see - **20b**

B. TO LOVE GOD, THEREFORE, MEANS WE MUST DEVELOP BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. This is why we have the commandment from Jesus - cf. **Jn 13:34-35**
2. Indeed, Jesus taught that loving God and one another were the two greatest commandments of the old law! - **Mt 22:35-40**

CONCLUSION

1. If "brotherly love" is...
 - a. Evidence of sonship
 - b. Defined by God's love for us
 - c. Evidence of fellowship with God
 - d. A means of providing assurance in the day of judgment
 - e. Essential to loving God...then how dare we neglect this most essential commandment of God?
2. While there are other commands of our Lord that we must be careful to obey, none is so important, so essential to our spiritual life as God's children, as this one:

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."
- Jn 15:12

Are we letting the love that God displayed toward us through His Son Jesus to teach us how to love one another?

Three Tests Of Authentic Christianity

1 John 5:1-5

INTRODUCTION

1. As we began our study of First John, it was noted that it had a different objective than the Gospel of John...
 - a. John wrote his gospel in order that one might **have** eternal life - **Jn 20:30-31**
 - b. His epistle was written so that one might **know** they have eternal life - **1 Jn 5:13**
2. Throughout his epistle, then, John has mentioned the kind of things that provide evidence that one is truly a child of God, possessing fellowship with the Father and the Son - e.g., **1 Jn 3:10**
3. There are actually several tests that John has been applying by which we can know that we have eternal life, and in the text for our study (**1 Jn 5:1-5**), they are mentioned together (read)

[In these verses there are “**Three Tests Of Authentic Christianity**”, and the first one is...]

I. THE TEST OF “BELIEF”

A. IN PARTICULAR, BELIEF IN JESUS...

1. As the Christ - **1 Jn 5:1a**
2. As the Son of God - **1 Jn 5:5b**
3. Who has come in the flesh - cf. **1 Jn 4:2**

B. TO DENY JESUS AS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD...

1. Makes one a liar and antichrist - cf. **1 Jn 2:22**
2. Makes fellowship with the Father and the Son impossible - cf. **1 Jn 2:22-23; 2 Jn 7-9**

C. THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH FAITH IN JESUS...

1. Necessary for one to be “born of God” - **1 Jn 5:1a**
 - a. Just as faith in God is necessary to please Him - **He 11:6**
 - b. So faith in Jesus is necessary to experience eternal life - cf. **Jn 8:24; Ac 8:36-37**
2. Necessary for one to “overcome the world” - **1 Jn 5:4-5**
 - a. We can overcome the world only through the One who lives in us - cf. **1 Jn 4:4**
 - b. But with such strength, we can do anything God desires of us - cf. **Ph 4:13**

[Without faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God who came in the flesh, we cannot be born of God and so live so as to overcome the world! But is “belief in Jesus” the only test of authentic Christianity? Not according to Jesus, as found in **Jn 8:30-31**. As taught by both Jesus and His beloved disciple John, there is also...]

II. THE TEST OF “LOVE”

A. JESUS HAD MADE BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. A mark of discipleship - **Jn 13:34-35**
2. A commandment to prove we are His friends - **Jn 15:12-14,17**

B. JOHN HAD STRESSED BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. As evidence of abiding in the light - **1 Jn 2:10**
2. As evidence of being a child of God - **1 Jn 3:10**
3. As evidence of having passed from death to life - **1 Jn 3:14**
4. As evidence of knowing God and being born of God - **1 Jn 4:7-8**

C. AND NOW, IN DISCUSSING BROTHERLY LOVE...

1. John describes it as a necessary corollary to loving God - **1 Jn 5:1a**
 - a. If you love God who brings forth children...
 - b. ...then you must love those children who have come from Him!
2. John reveals how we can be sure that we love God's children (i.e., have brotherly love): by loving God and keeping His commandments - **1 Jn 5:2**
 - a. I may claim to love my brethren...
 - b. But if I do not love God and keep His commandments, my claim is a shallow one!

[One who is truly "born of God" not only believes in Jesus, then, but also loves the children of God. In discussing the necessity of loving the children of God, John mentioned keeping the commandments of God. This leads to the third test of authentic Christianity, that of...]

III. THE TEST OF "OBEDIENCE"

A. JOHN HAD EMPHASIZED THIS TEST EARLIER...

1. As essential to having fellowship with the Father - **1 Jn 1:6-7**
2. As essential to knowing Jesus - **1 Jn 2:3-4**
3. As essential to loving God - **1 Jn 2:5**
4. As essential to abiding in Jesus - **1 Jn 2:6**
5. As essential to being a child of God - **1 Jn 3:10**
6. As essential to having our prayers answered - **1 Jn 3:22**

B. NOW HE STRESSES THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL TO...

1. Loving the children of God - **1 Jn 5:2**
2. Loving God Himself - **1 Jn 5:3a**

C. TO JOHN, HOWEVER, THIS "TEST" IS NOT A BURDEN...

1. The commandments of God are not "burdensome" - **1 Jn 5:3b**
2. Though he had served the Lord for many years (possibly 50 or more), he had not found the commandments "grievous" (KJV)
3. His attitude toward "commandment-keeping" was like that of David's - **Psa 19:7-11**

CONCLUSION

1. In these three areas, then, we find the proof of authentic Christianity:

- a. Belief in Jesus as the Son of God who came in the flesh
 - b. Love for the brethren
 - c. Obedience in keeping the commandments of God
2. It is interesting that today...
- a. Many people do not have any problem with the first two (belief and love)
 - b. But will often balk when told they need to be obedient to the commands of Jesus Christ (“Oh, you are just being legalistic!”)
3. But if we really love God and His children, if we really believe in Jesus as the Son of God who came in the flesh and died for our sins, then the commandments of the Lord will not be grievous...

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” - Jn 14:15

Are we passing the tests of authentic Christianity?

Witnesses For Jesus Christ

1 John 5:6-10

INTRODUCTION

1. Earlier in his epistle, John stressed two important things...
 - a. That Jesus Christ has come in the flesh - **1 Jn 4:2**
 - b. That those who believe Jesus Christ has come in the flesh are “of God”; indeed, they have been “born of God” - **1 Jn 4:2; 5:1a**

2. In the text for our study (**1 Jn 5:6-10**), John offers several “witnesses” in support of these claims made about Jesus...
 - a. The key word is “**witness**”, and in various forms is found **eight times** in our text (nine, if you count verse 8)
 - b. The word in Greek is “**martureo**” {mar-too-reh’-o}, and it means:
 - 1) “to be a witness, i.e. testify”
 - 2) “to give evidence for, to bear record:

[In our lesson we shall briefly list these “**Witnesses For Jesus Christ**”, and see how each of them has their part in providing evidence about Jesus. We begin with two witnesses, actually, who together tell us something about Jesus coming in the flesh...]

I. THE WITNESS OF THE WATER AND THE BLOOD (6a,8b)

A. THE LIKELY CONTEXT OF JOHN’S WORDS...

1. Evidently there was a doctrine that denied Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh - **1 Jn 4:1-3**;
cf. **2 Jn 7**
2. A heretical movement later known as Gnosticism was developing at this time
3. One representative of Gnosticism, a man named Cerinthus, taught:
 - a. That the divine Christ descended upon Jesus at the time of his baptism
 - b. And then left him before he died on the cross
4. Thus the Gnostics claimed that the “Christ” did not experience death

B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WATER AND THE BLOOD...

1. The “water” likely refers to Jesus’ baptism, and the “blood” to His death on the cross
2. John’s emphasis is that Jesus Christ came by both water and blood, and not by water only
- cf. **1 Jn 5:6a**
3. Thus emphasizing that not only was the Christ present at the baptism, but that He also suffered in the flesh on the cross

[Like the stones set up by Jacob and Laban served as a “witness” (cf. **Gen 31:43-52**), so the waters of Jesus’ baptism and the blood that flowed from His side offer testimony concerning who Jesus Christ truly was. But these two “witnesses” (water and blood) are not alone, they are joined by another...]

II. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT (6b,8b)

A. THE SPIRIT ALSO BEARS WITNESS...

1. Because of His involvement in the earthly life of Jesus, the Spirit can testify to...
 - a. The conception of Jesus - cf. **Mt 1:20**
 - b. The baptism of Jesus - cf. **Mt 3:16**
 - c. The temptation of Jesus - cf. **Lk 4:1**
 - d. The ministry of Jesus - cf. **Lk 4:18**
2. According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit was to testify about Jesus - **Jn 15:26**
3. The Holy Spirit did this by inspiring the apostles and confirming their word with spiritual gifts - cf. **Jn 16:13-14; He 2:3-4**

B. THE SPIRIT AGREES WITH THE WATER AND THE BLOOD...

1. The Spirit, the water, and the blood, all three bear witness, and agree as one
2. That is, they all testify that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh!
3. The significance of having three witnesses agreeing may be taken from the requirement found in **Deu 19:15**, *“by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.”*

[At this point we might simply note that most translations omit the words from “in heaven” (vs. 7) through “on earth” (vs. 8). Apparently there is good reason for doing so, since these words are found only in four or five manuscripts, and none dating earlier than the 14th century A.D. They are not found in literally thousands of manuscripts dating much earlier. They are likely a gloss. As we continue, John mentions yet another witness...]

III. THE WITNESS OF GOD (9)

A. WHICH OUGHT TO HAVE GREAT WEIGHT WITH US...

1. “If we receive the witness of men...”
 - a. This is a simple conditional sentence that is true to fact
 - b. It means “Since we receive the witness of men...” (which we do in courts of law, don’t we?)
2. Any witness of God would naturally be greater than that of man

B. GOD HAS TESTIFIED OF HIS SON...

1. Certainly God has born witness to Jesus on several occasions
 - a. At His baptism - **Mt 3:17**
 - b. At the mount of transfiguration - **Mt 17:5**
2. It is probable, though, that John has reference to the witness of the blood, the water, and the Spirit, that together they form the witness of God

[So we have three witnesses who in agreement speak for the fourth witness (God). When a person believes the testimony given about Jesus as the Son of God, there is even a “fifth witness”, that such faith will result in one being “born of God”...]

IV. THE WITNESS IN THE BELIEVER (10a)

A. HE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON OF GOD HAS THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF...

1. This statement is reminiscent of Jesus' words in **Jn 7:16-17**
 - a. Those who do the will of God (as taught by Jesus)...
 - b. ...shall know that the doctrine of Christ is truly from God
2. Likewise the one who believes in the Son, receives confirmation "in himself" ...
 - a. About who Jesus truly is
 - b. How one who believes in Him is "born of God"

B. ADMITTEDLY, THIS IS A VERY SUBJECTIVE WITNESS...

1. As such, one must be very careful with it
2. Many people can easily deceive themselves into thinking that some feeling is an indication that they are saved, or that God has confirmed something to them - cf. **Pro 14:12; 16:25**
3. But if we believe (and act upon) the witness of God concerning His Son...
 - a. Revealed in His Spirit-inspired Word
 - b. Which agrees with the witness of the water and the blood
...then we will have confirmation in ourselves that Jesus is truly the Son of God!
4. One way we have confirmation is the change that takes place in our lives as we grow in Christ
 - a. Just as our love for one another is an indication of passing from death to life - **1 Jn 3:14**
 - b. Just as our unity with one another is evidence that Jesus was truly sent from God
- cf. **Jn 17:20-23**

CONCLUSION

1. These are the "witnesses", then, that John offers in support of Jesus Christ...
 - a. That He came in the flesh
 - b. That those who believe Jesus is the Christ are "born of God"
2. The first four (**water, blood, Spirit, God**) provide their evidence whether you believe them or not; but if you will believe them, then you will receive the fifth (the witness in yourself)!
3. But suppose you do not believe the four witnesses? John says you then make God a liar! - cf. **1 Jn 5:11b**

Do you wish to stand before God on the day of judgment and answer why you believed Him to be a liar? How much better to believe on the Son, and through obedient faith become His child! - cf. **Ga 3:26-27**

Life In The Son

1 John 5:11-13

INTRODUCTION

1. We saw in the previous lesson that the word “**witness**” was used eight times in one form or another - cf. **1 Jn 5:6-10**
2. A form of the word is used again in **verses 11-13**, translated as “**testimony**” in the NKJV (“**record**” in the KJV)
3. In these verses, John reviews the “testimony” that God has given about His Son...
 - a. In this case, it does not appear to be the **evidence** God has offered (that was covered in **verses 6-10**)
 - b. Rather, the **content** of the testimony which the evidence supports

[What is the **content** of God’s testimony concerning His Son? What has God declared? And what does John say about these things? In this lesson, entitled “**Life In The Son**”, we shall examine **verses 11-13** to see what we can learn. For example, we are first told that...]

I. GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE (11a)

A. ETERNAL LIFE: A PRESENT POSSESSION, OR A FUTURE HOPE...?

1. John writes of “eternal life” as present possession...
 - a. “God has given us (not will give us) eternal life” - **1 Jn 5:11**
 - b. “He who has the Son has (not will have) eternal life” - **1 Jn 5:12**
 - c. “...that you may know that you have (not will have) eternal life”- **1 Jn 5:13**
2. Yet Paul wrote of “eternal life” as a future hope...
 - a. “who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those...” - **Ro 2:6-7**
 - b. “...you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” - **Ro 6:22**
 - c. “in hope of eternal life...” - **Ti 1:2**

--Which then is it? A present possession, or a future hope?

B. ETERNAL LIFE: BOTH A PRESENT POSSESSION AND A FUTURE HOPE...!

1. I believe it is both, not one or the other
2. This is a case where the same term (eternal life) is used by different authors to describe different concepts
 - a. Paul normally uses the term to describe that which begins after the judgment...
 - 1) The same way Jesus uses it in **Mt 25:46**
 - 2) And again in **Jn 12:25**
 - b. Whereas John uses the term to describe the life we now have in Christ because of the fellowship we enjoy with the Father and the Son...
 - 1) Jesus defined “eternal life” as knowing the Father and His Son - **Jn 17:1-3**
 - 2) John defines it similarly in **1 Jn 5:20**

3. We must be careful, therefore, and allow the immediate context to determine the proper meaning by a particular author

C. THE MEANING OF ETERNAL LIFE IN OUR TEXT...

1. John began his epistle by referring to Jesus as “that eternal life” - **1 Jn 1:2**
2. He ends his epistle by describing eternal life as knowing Him who is true and being in Him who is true (i.e., in Jesus) - **1 Jn 5:20**
3. This leads me to believe that John uses “eternal life” in the same way Jesus did in **Jn 17:3**
4. I.e., a quality of life that comes from having true fellowship with Deity...
 - a. Which begins upon our conversion from “death” to “life” - cf. **1 Jn 3:14-15**
 - b. Which comes from “knowing” God and Jesus (the term “knowing” suggesting a close and personal relationship, not a casual awareness)
 - c. Because God and Jesus are “eternal life” (cf. **1 Jn 1:2**), those in fellowship with them have life that is best described as “eternal” (in quality, though potentially in quantity)

[So the testimony of God is first this: He has given us “eternal life”, a quality of life based upon fellowship with Deity! But where does one find this “eternal life”? The testimony of God continues...]

II. ETERNAL LIFE IS IN HIS SON (11b,12)

A. HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS LIFE...

1. We saw where Jesus defined “eternal life” as knowing God and Himself - cf. **Jn 17:3**
2. Jesus also taught that He came that we might have “abundant life” - **Jn 10:10**
3. As confessed by Peter, only Jesus truly has “the words of eternal life” - **Jn 6:68**
4. Paul wrote that all spiritual blessings (of which eternal life is one) are found in Jesus - **Ep 1:3**
-- The conclusion should be fairly obvious: it is only in Jesus that eternal life can be found, and if we wish to have eternal life, we must be in Jesus!

B. HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE LIFE...

1. This sounds rather exclusive, but no more so than Jesus’ own words in **Jn 14:6**
2. Peter also made it clear that salvation (life) is found only in Jesus - **Ac 4:12**
-- Therefore, one who remains outside of Christ has no hope for eternal life (in either sense of the term)

[Of course, it is not the will of God than any perish (cf. **2 Pe 3:9; 1 Ti 2:3-4**). Therefore, through His Spirit He inspired John to write so we might know whether or not we have the Son. In other words...]

III. WE MAY KNOW THAT WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE (13)

A. JOHN HAS WRITTEN THAT WE MIGHT KNOW...

1. That has been the purpose of this particular epistle
2. His desire is that we “know” we are saved, not just hope that we are...
 - a. “Now by this we know that we know Him...” - **1 Jn 2:3**
 - b. “By this we know that we are in Him.” - **1 Jn 2:5b**
 - c. “We know we have passed from death to life...” - **1 Jn 3:14a**
 - d. “And by this we know that we are of the truth...” - **1 Jn 3:19a**

- e. “And by this we know that He abides in us...” - **1 Jn 3:24b**
- f. “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us...” - **1 Jn 4:13a**
- 3. Thus, throughout his epistle he has been giving us “benchmarks” by which we can know whether we have eternal life in us

B. WHEN DOES ONE “KNOW” THEY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE...?

- 1. When they keep the commandments of Jesus - **1 Jn 2:3-4**
- 2. When they keep His words - **1 Jn 2:5**
- 3. When they love the brethren - **1 Jn 3:14**
- 4. When they believe what the Spirit has revealed about such things - **1 Jn 3:24; 4:13**
- 5. When they confess Jesus to be the Son of God - **1 Jn 4:15**
- 6. When they believe that Jesus is the Christ - **1 Jn 5:1**
- Taken together, these “benchmarks” reveal that one truly “knows” the Lord, and thereby has “eternal life” - cf. **1 Jn 5:20**

CONCLUSION

- 1. John’s desire was that his readers would continue to believe in the name of the Son of God - **1 Jn 5:13c**
 - a. That is my desire also, and I pray that in some small way that I have encouraged you to remain strong in your faith in Jesus Christ
 - b. If you do not yet believe, or your faith is weak, I commend to you the Gospel of John - cf. **Jn 20:30-31**
- 2. Dear friend, do you truly have “eternal life”?
 - a. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who came in the flesh and died for our sins? - cf. **Jn 8:24**
 - b. Are you keeping the commands of Jesus?
 - 1) Such as His command to be baptized? - cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16**
 - 2) Which we learn from His apostles is the means by which we receive Christ? - cf. **Ga 3:26-27**
 - c. Do you love the brethren? - cf. **Jn 13:34-35**

May this First Epistle of John encourage you to examine whether you really “know” Jesus Christ, and thereby have “eternal life” in Him!

Praying With Confidence And Compassion

1 John 5:14-17

INTRODUCTION

1. Nearing the end of his epistle, John has a few words on the subject of prayer - **1 Jn 5:14-17**
2. This is not the first time he has broached this subject, for he has already mentioned...
 - a. The value of confessing our sins, which is done in prayer - **1 Jn 1:9**
 - b. Our Advocate in prayer, Jesus Christ the righteous - **1 Jn 2:1**
 - c. One reason why we receive what we ask in prayer - **1 Jn 3:22**
3. In his final words on this subject, John does two things...
 - a. Expands upon a theme in prayer already introduced (praying with confidence)
 - b. Brings in another theme in prayer that is harmony with the tone throughout his epistle (praying with compassion, consistent with his teachings on brotherly love)

[As we examine his words in **verses 14-17**, we shall endeavor to take note of what else John has written, and use this as the basis for this study which we call **“Praying With Confidence And Compassion”**. First, let’s consider how we can pray with confidence our prayers will be answered...]

I. PRAYING WITH CONFIDENCE (14-15)

A. REQUIRES ASKING ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL...

1. This is the point emphasized in **1 Jn 5:14-15**
2. Confidence in prayer is not based upon some assumption that we have “carte blanche” in regards to prayer...
 - a. Some may improperly conclude that we do from Jesus’ statements in **Jn 14:13-14**
 - b. But even Jesus’ own example illustrates that answer to prayer depends upon whether or not it is in harmony with God’s will - e.g., **Mt 26:39,42**
 - c. Paul learned this when he prayed about his “thorn in the flesh” - cf. **2 Co 12:7-9**
3. However, the more we learn God’s revealed will (i.e., the Word of God)...
 - a. The more likely we will pray according to His will
 - b. The greater confidence we can have that our prayers will be answered accordingly

B. REQUIRES KEEPING GOD’S COMMANDMENTS...

1. This was stressed in **1 Jn 3:22**
2. Even if we are asking something that would normally be within God’s will for us...
 - a. If we are not keeping His commandments...
 - b. ...can we really expect God to favorably answer our prayers?
3. As Peter quoted from the Proverbs: **“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And his ears are open to their prayers...”** - **1 Pe 3:12**
4. The righteous are those who “do those things that are pleasing in His sight” - cf. **1 Jn 3:22b**
5. Especially in regard to believing in Jesus and loving the brethren, two commandments given

to us - **1 Jn 3:23**

C. REQUIRES ABIDING IN JESUS, AND HIS WORDS ABIDING IN US...

1. This was taught by Jesus Himself, and recorded by John in **Jn 15:7**
2. This should also help to clarify any misunderstanding from taking **Jn 14:13-14** in isolation from its context
3. These words of Jesus actually summarize what we have already seen John to say...
 - a. Confidence in prayer depends upon keeping the commandments, but keeping the commandments is the key to abiding in Jesus! - cf. **1 Jn 3:24a**
 - b. Confidence in prayer depends upon asking according to God's Will, but if Jesus' words abide in us, won't that help us know God's will, and what is proper to ask of Him?

[Therefore, if we learn the words of Jesus, keep His commandments and thereby abide in Him, we will know what is in harmony with God's will and pray accordingly. In this way we can have the "confidence in prayer" of which John writes! But from an apostle to whom the command to "**love the brethren**" was a recurring theme, we should not be surprised to find him teaching also about...]

II. PRAYING WITH COMPASSION (16-17)

A. FOR A BROTHER...

1. This epistle of John has been one in which John has stressed "brotherly love"
2. He has told us that we "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" - **1 Jn 3:16**
3. He has said that if "one sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" - **1 Jn 3:17**
4. Certainly, then, we should be willing and ready to pray for our brethren, especially when we see them...

B. SINNING A SIN NOT UNTO DEATH...

1. This is a difficult passage, one that raises several questions...
 - a. Does the present tense of the verb "sinning" necessarily imply that the brother is still engaged in the sin when we are to pray for him?
 - b. What is the "sin not unto death" versus the "sin unto death"?
 - c. What is meant that "He will give him life"?

-- Whatever conclusions we draw should be in harmony with the rest of the scriptures, and with other principles revealed therein, just as we do not draw conclusions about praying with confidence based upon **Jn 14:13-14** alone
2. While open to further consideration, my present understanding of this passage is this:
 - a. The present tense of the verb does not demand that the brother is still engaged in the sin when we are to pray for him...
 - 1) Present tense in the Greek can describe action that is either linear or punctiliar
 - 2) That is, John could just as easily be saying "If anyone sees his brother **sin** (not **sinning**) a sin..."
 - 3) And thus the asking in his behalf is after the fact, i.e., in the future after the sin has been committed (note, "he **will** ask", suggesting in the future)
 - b. The difference between "a sin which does not lead to death" and "a sin leading to death"...

- 1) John says in **1 Jn 5:17a**, “all unrighteousness is sin”, therefore any sin is not to be taken lightly
- 2) But there is sin “not leading to death”
 - a) That is, sin which does not progress to the point in which one experiences spiritual death, or separation from God
 - b) As indicated by James, sin does not produce “death” until it is “full grown” - **Ja 1:15**
 - c) Sin which does not produce (lead to) death would therefore be sin **repented of**
- 3) Sin “leading to death”, producing spiritual death and separation from God would be sin **unrepented of**
 - a) We cannot expect God to forgive one who refuses to repent
 - b) As John writes with some understatement: “I do not say that he should pray about that” - **1 Jn 5:16d**

C. GOD WILL GIVE HIM LIFE...

1. If the death in this passage is “spiritual death”, it is natural to assume the life is “spiritual life”
 - a. The “life” which God will grant our penitent brother in answer to our prayers could also be described as “forgiveness”
 - b. Which is a crucial element of the “eternal life” to which John has referred throughout this epistle
2. Thus the promise offered in **1 Jn 1:9** to the child of God who penitently confesses his own sin in prayer is offered in **1 Jn 5:16** to the penitent brother when prayer is made on his behalf by another member of the family of God
 - a. One might ask, “Why bother to pray for a penitent brother if his sins will be forgiven anyway as taught in **1 Jn 1:9**?”
 - b. One answer might be found in **Ja 5:16**, where we are taught to pray for one another: *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*

CONCLUSION

1. The privilege of prayer is a wonderful blessing, especially when we do so with...
 - a. Confidence
 - b. Compassion
2. Are we fulfilling the requirements to be able to pray with confidence?
 - a. Abiding in Jesus, and letting His words abide in us?
 - b. Keeping His commandments and doing the things pleasing in His sight?
 - c. Asking according to God’s Will?
3. Are we praying with compassion?
 - a. Praying not only for ourselves, but for our brethren in need?
 - b. Praying for brethren overtaken by sin, but who have demonstrated that their sin is not one leading to death?

As we all need the fullness of God’s blessings in our lives, let’s encourage one another to do whatever we can to be able to pray with both confidence and compassion!

Certainties Of The Christian Faith

1 John 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION

1. In this last section of John's epistle, we find him summarizing three facts or "certainties" that his readers should have learned - **1 Jn 5:18-21**
2. These "**Certainties of the Christian Faith**" relate to sin, the evil one, and the truth concerning fellowship with God and Jesus Christ
3. Each of these **certainties** is introduced by the words "we know", and as we consider these three facts we shall begin each section in the same way

[First of all, then, "we know"...]

I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE BORN OF GOD AND SIN (18)

A. "WHOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN..."

1. This statement, like the one in **1 Jn 3:9**, can be somewhat troubling to the English reader
2. But as we noticed in the lesson on that portion of scripture...
 - a. John has already affirmed that Christians sin - cf. **1 Jn 1:8,10**
 - b. To say we have no sin is to lie, and to make God a liar
 - c. So John is talking about one who does not "continuously practice sin" (in light of the present tense of the verb, this is an acceptable translation)
3. As stated by Plummer, "**A child of God may sin; but his normal condition is one of resistance to sin.**" (The Epistles of St. John, p.125)

B. "BUT HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD KEEPS HIMSELF..."

1. John explains why the one born of God does not continuously practice sin, but it is difficult to know exactly what he means...
 - a. Some translations have "keeps him" instead of "keeps himself"
 - b. This is because such translators believe "he who has been born of God" is a reference to Jesus
 - c. And yet in his epistle, the phrase "born of God" always has reference to the child of Christ, i.e., the Christian
2. Assuming that "himself" is the correct wording...
 - a. It becomes clear that the individual bears some responsibility in keeping oneself from sinning
 - b. While it is true that we have help from God (cf. **1 Jn 3:9**, "*for His seed remains in him*"), our faith must cooperate with God's power - e.g., **1 Pe 1:5**
 - c. Thus the charge to "keep yourselves..." - cf. **1 Jn 5:21; Ju 21**

C. "THE WICKED ONE DOES NOT TOUCH HIM..."

1. When we cooperate with God, Satan has no chance...
 - a. When we submit to God, and resist the devil, the devil flees! - cf. **Ja 4:7**
 - b. For God who is in us is certainly greater than the devil! - **1 Jn 4:4**
2. Instrumental in our cooperation with God is allowing His word to abide in us - **1 Jn 2:14**
3. Even as the Word was instrumental in helping Jesus overcome the temptations of Satan - cf. "it is written..." **Mt 4:4,7,10**

[So the first **certainty** of the Christian faith is that one born of God does not treat sin lightly, and with God's help is able to win the conflict with "the wicked one". Now for the second **certainty** summarized by John: "We know"...]

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND THE WORLD (19)

A. "WE ARE OF GOD..."

1. The Christian has been "born of God" - **1 Jn 5:1**
2. The Christian is privileged to be called the "child of God" - **1 Jn 3:1,2a**
- Thus we are blessed to be "of God"!

B. "THE WHOLE WORLD LIES UNDER THE SWAY OF THE WICKED ONE..."

1. Sadly, those in the world are not "of God"
2. For when one rejects Jesus Christ, they demonstrate who their "father" truly is - cf. **Jn 8:42-47**
3. While they remain in their sins, they remain under the sway of Satan - cf. **1 Jn 3:8,10**

[Whose "child" are we? Those who are in Christ have the assurance that God is their father. Those not in Christ are still under the influences of Satan who has blinded them (- cf. **2 Co 4:3-4**)! Finally, "we know"...]

III. THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE (20)

A. "THE SON OF GOD HAS COME AND HAS GIVEN US UNDERSTANDING..."

1. Jesus has come to give us true insight concerning God
2. As John declared in his gospel: "*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*" - **Jn 1:18**

B. "THAT WE MAY KNOW..."

1. "...**Him who is true**"
 - a. Or as expressed in other translations: "He is the true God"
 - b. "**By true God [John] does not mean one who tells the truth, but him who is really God.**" (Calvin, The First Epistle of John, p. 273)
 - c. By coming in the flesh, Jesus has manifested the true God to us - cf. **Jn 14:7-9**
2. "...**and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ**"
 - a. Jesus has also given us understanding about how we can be in God
 - b. It is through His Son, as we keep His words and His commandments, that we can abide in God - **Jn 14:21,23**

C. “THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE...”

1. Again, the expression “true God” is saying He who is “the real God”
2. With this declaration, John is also defining what “eternal life” truly is...
 - a. It is to “know” Him who is true
 - b. It is to be “in Him” who is true, and “in His Son Jesus Christ”
3. I.e., eternal life (as defined by John) is that abundant life...
 - a. Which comes from “knowing” the Father and the Son intimately
 - b. Which comes by having “fellowship” with the Father and the Son
4. So John intimated at the beginning of his epistle - cf. **1 Jn 1:2-3**
5. And so Jesus declared in His prayer in **Jn 17:1-3**

CONCLUSION

1. Here then are the “**Certainties Of The Christian Faith**” as summarized by John...
 - a. “We know” the relationship between those born of God and sin
 - b. “We know” the difference between us and those of the world
 - c. “We know” the basis of fellowship with God and eternal life
2. May the First Epistle of John always serve to remind of these certainties, and may the last verse always remind us of the need for diligence:

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

3. With his favorite term of endearment, John admonishes us to stay away from anything that would replace our devotion to the One True God
 - a. We may think that we are too sophisticated to succumb to idolatry
 - b. But as Paul pointed out time and again, anything that replaces God in our hearts is an idol - **Ep 5:5; Co 3:5**

Note well: If there was no danger of being led astray, there would be no need for a warning!