

The Epistles of John

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Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter One of First John	5
Chapter Two of First John	18
Chapter Three of First John	40
Chapter Four of First John	47
Chapter Five of First John	53
2 John	59
3 John	62

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Introduction to the Epistles of John

Who is the author of the epistles of John? In none of the New Testament epistles does John identify himself as the author. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of similarity between the Epistles of John and the Gospel of John. Most scholars accept that John wrote the Gospel of John. Consider these words found in John 21:20-24:

“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”

John was the disciple that leaned upon Jesus’ breast at the Lord’s Supper. Hence it was John that “testified of these things” written in the Gospel of John.

Now we would expect that John is the author of the three epistles as we consider the following similarities between the Gospel of John and the three Epistles of John:

“That your joy may be full.” 1 John 1:4

“That your joy may be full.” John 16:24

“We have an Advocate.” 1 John 2:1

“Give you another Comforter [Advocate]” John 14:16

“We know Him, if we keep His commandments.” 1 John 2:3

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15

“A new commandment I write unto you.” 1 John 2:8

“A new commandment I give unto you.” John 13:34

“The true Light now shineth.” 1 John 2:8

“The true Light, which lighteth.” John 1:9

“Knoweth not whither he goeth.” 1 John 2:17

“Knoweth not whither he goeth.” John 12:35

“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” 1 John 2:23

“He that hateth me hateth my Father also.” John 15:23

“We have passed from death unto life.” 1 John 3:14

“Is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24

“This life is in his Son.” 1 John 5:11

“In Him was life.” John 1:4

There are many more similarities between the Epistles of John and the Gospel of John. Consider how both of these books begin:

“That which was from the beginning...the Word of life.” 1 John 1:1

“In the beginning was the Word.” John 1:1

There are other similarities, such as, style, vocabulary, the order of words, the use of prepositions, and grammatical constructions. We have the same pairing of opposites, such as, darkness versus light, death versus life, and hate versus love.

Whatever the differences between the Epistles of John and the Gospel of John are not proof of a different author, but of differing objectives, date of composition, and the advancing age of John.

What is the most likely date of the epistles?

The Epistles of John were written around 90 AD, if not even at a later date like 95 AD.

Since the Epistles of John do not contain specific reference (1) to John as the author, (2) to the place from which it was written, or (3) to the time it was written, we must look for some internal evidence itself.

John may have been up in years since he refers to the readers as “little children.” (1 John 2:1, 12, 18; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). We also notice that there was no reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This does not prove that the epistle was written at a later date, but it could indicate that the church had already adjusted to this terrible calamity.

Why was First John written?

The general aim of the epistle and the Bible is fellowship with God and our fellow man. See 1 John 1:3 (More on this point later.)

There are also varied references to false teachers and false doctrines. See 2:18, 19; 4:1. It is clear that heresies had troubled the church, and that false teachers from within had tried to subvert the faith (1 John 2:18, 19). Although they had left the true church, their influence lingered and threatened the church. John writes to counteract this danger, to establish the body of Christ on the essentials of the Christian faith, and to make the truth so attractive that none would want to deny it, change it, or leave it.

Some of these false teachers taught that Christ had a different human nature than you and me. To combat these errors, John stresses the reality of Christ’s visible human nature during the incarnation (1 John 1:1-3), that He did come in the flesh (1 John 4:2), and that believers may enjoy this true knowledge (1 John 5:20).

The Epistles of John are pastoral in nature. So John would write lovingly to these “little children” or spiritual children of God. Therefore, he emphasizes that “God is love,” (1 John 4:8) and that “love is of God” (1 John 4:7). God loves us and therefore we should love one another (1 John 4:10, 11). Yet this lofty theme of love is in contrast to the much opposition from within.

John tells us what his primary objectives of writing I John. We will consider three of them:

First, John writes that our joy may be complete.

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” 1 John 1:4

This should be our objective also in whatsoever we say and do.

Second, John is writing to exhort us not to sin.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” 1 John 2:1

This should also be our objective in whatsoever we say and do.

Third, John is writing so that you might know that you have eternal life.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” 1 John 5:13

Purpose statement: The purpose of John’s epistles was to sustain Christians in their fellowship with God and other believers, especially in the face of conflict, that they might be equipped to stand against false teachers and false doctrines that would disrupt their blessed fellowship with God and one another.

What is the key word for First John?

The key word is “fellowship.” 1 John 1:3

The word fellowship comes from the Greek word “koinonia.” Koinonia is best described as something that is shared between two persons. So when the Bible says that we are to have fellowship (koinonia) with the Father, it means that we will share something in common with the Father. When it says that we are to have fellowship (koinonia) with the Son, we are to share something in common with Jesus. What will we share in common? God wants to share His altogether beautiful character qualities of love, joy, peace, mercy, humility, etc. In other words, we may have the humility of Jesus because He will share His humility with us through the work of the Holy Spirit. He will share His love with us. He will share His patience with us. If we need patience, then we may receive the perfect patience of Jesus.

Let us now begin our journey in First John and learn to have a deeper and more intimate fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Chapter One of First John

Introduction: 1:1-4

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

1:2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

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

John begins his first epistle with “that which was.” This is in reference to Jesus, who is the Word of life.

“That which was from the beginning,” John establishes the preexistence of Christ. Indeed, the “Word of life” was from the beginning, for He had created all things. See John 1:1-3; Colossians 16, 17

But it is also true that John and the apostles had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry, which establishes their credentials as witnesses of the Savior’s life.

The “we” is no doubt those who had been with Jesus “from the beginning,” namely, the apostles.

And the perfect tense of the phrase “have heard,” means that these precious memories of their time with Jesus are still very warm in their hearts.

They had both seen and heard Jesus, the Eternal One. They saw Him with their own eyes, thus leaving no room for doubt. They “have looked upon” denoting that they had seen His entire ministry. In fact, while they were with Him they watched everything that He did and could not take their eyes off of Him.

Why did they keep watching Him? (Verse 2) They kept watching Him because Jesus manifested before them what eternal life is all about. He manifested that eternal life “which was with the Father.”

By watching Jesus, they recognized that eternal life is the life of Christ. Eternal life is about character, behavior, how you see people and treat people. It is a kind of life. It is a holy and loving life.

In verse 1, John says, “our hands had handled” of the Word of life, means that they closely examined the life of Jesus while they were with Him, thus refuting the various heresies by others who doubted the earthly existence of Christ.

While John establishes his apostolic authority, the main theme is still fellowship with the Father and the Son, whereby we receive eternal life. In verse 2, John makes it clear that Jesus manifested that eternal life in our flesh and blood. Notice what John says in his gospel in John 1:14, where he says, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” John 1:14

The key thought would be that we are able to have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and with one another, because Jesus became one of us. Sin had separated us from God. But Jesus lived a sinless life in our flesh and blood that we may now enjoy close fellowship with Them and with one another. And truly our fellowship is made possible with Jesus living within us through the Spirit. The Jesus in me meets the Jesus in you and we have sweet Christian fellowship. This is the blessing of fellowship [“koinonia”] where God will share Himself with us.

This fellowship with God helps to explain the believer’s desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus. It explains how we participate in answering Jesus’ prayer “that they may be

one, even as We are one.” John 17:22. We become one with Them, when God lives in our heart by faith. Fellowship with God is made possible when we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in having the life of Christ imparted to us.

This fellowship is our connecting link between heaven and earth. In fact, “the Word” is in reference to “Jesus Christ.” The double title, “Jesus Christ,” (verse 3) shows that John is considering both the humanity of Jesus by using the name “Jesus,” and also His divinity by using the title “Christ.”

Let us now consider verse 4: As John concludes in this epilogue, he says “These things have I written unto you.” “These things” would be referring to the first three verses that will prove to be the main theme throughout the epistle. “Unto you” would refer to fellow believers.

“That your joy may be full” would be the natural result of fellowship with Christ. Fellowship with God and one another is joy to the fullest. It is when we are at odds with God and our fellowman that we experience despair, loss of meaning, and a loss of joy.

We find frequent references to joy throughout John’s writings. Let us consider a few of them:

John 3:27-30

“John (the Baptist) answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 3:28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 3:29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: **this my joy therefore is fulfilled.** 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.”

What do we find as the context of “this my joy therefore is fulfilled”? We find the lesson that Christ must increase and we must decrease. As Christ becomes more and more, we will experience greater joy. As we hear the voice of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, our joy is increased. If we want more joy, then we must have more of Him.

John 15:10-12

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, **and that your joy might be full.** 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”

What is the context of “that your joy might be full”? We find the keeping of God’s commandments, the abiding in His love, and loving one another. By abiding in the power of His love, we are able to keep His commandments in loving obedience and we are able to love one another as He loved us. So there is a strong connection between joy and receiving divine power to do the will of God as expressed in His Ten Commandments. There is greater joy in the Lord as our love grows for one another. In fact, you cannot separate your love for God and your love for man.

John 16:23, 24

“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, **that your joy may be full.**”

What do we find in the context “that your joy may be full”? We find the power of prayer. The more we pray to God and ask all things according to His perfect will the greater will be our joy. Often we pray according to our own will thinking that this will bring us the greatest joy. But it is not our will that is perfect and it is not our will that will bring the greatest joy. God’s perfect will is always for our best

eternal interest. So let us pray and ask all things according to His name—according to those things that agree with His perfect character.

John 17:13-17

“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, **that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves**. 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

What do we find in the context of “that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves”? As the Word fines fertile soil in our hearts, the earthliness and the worldliness are no more. No longer do the opinions of the world attract us. Rather we are drawn to God and His Word. We have come to know that God is our Source of strength, knowledge, and joy. It is by getting to know Him better, by seeing His Word transform our way of thinking and living, that are joy increases and overflows.

2 John 12

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, **that our joy may be full.**”

What is the context of “that our joy may be full?” It is a shared joy, namely, “our joy.” Our desire for communion with one another is due to our fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

After they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Bible says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:41

Let us now consider 1 John 1:5-7

1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

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

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

“The message which we have heard” is a message that John and the apostles had received. The message is that God is light. He is absolute purity and holiness. In Him is no darkness at all, none.

God is not some combination of light and darkness. He is not both good and evil. He is absolute perfection and in Him is nothing that is sinful, at all.

Light and darkness are counterparts; they are opposites. There are other counterparts found in Scripture, such as, righteousness and sin are counterparts, as well as truth verses error. Other counterparts would be “in the flesh” verses being “in the Spirit,” or being “carnally minded” verses being “spiritually minded.”

In the opening words of verse 6, John says, “If we say.” John is here including himself. He lovingly states that we are hypocritical if we profess to follow the way of light but voluntarily walk in darkness. Since God is light, all who fellowship with Him must also walk in the light. Hence, any who claim fellowship with the Father and yet walk in darkness must be lying.

Closely associated with “we lie,” is “we do not the truth.” (verse 6)

By failing to walk in the light we are walking in darkness, which is the same as failing to do the truth. However, there is hope. If we walk in the light we walk with God, from whom the light shines. When we serve the living God, believe in His Word, and walk in the light of His perfect character, then we cannot fail to walk in unity.

The phrase “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” is not an afterthought for walking in the light. All that the believer does and becomes is based upon the blood-stained merits of Jesus Christ. Here John is not only referring to the original cleansing when we accept Christ (called justification), but that cleansing from all unrighteousness throughout the life of the Christian (called sanctification).

While it is true that Christ alone has ever lived a sinless life; we can by our connection to Him be cleansed of all sin. Now note this important point: Those who walk closest to God will be the ones most conscious of their need for Christ and cleansing.

Let us now consider 1 John 1:8-10

1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

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

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

The phrase, “If we say,” (verse 8) can be something said aloud or simply within one’s heart. But if we say that “we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” In using the present tense, we would understand that there were those in John’s day that were either claiming perfection or that **they** were already perfect.

It is true that we can have victory over ever sin, but it is because of His perfection, not ours. We only have as much perfection as we have of Christ.

Instead of claiming perfection, we should be asking God to reveal to us how we are still unlike Jesus. There may be sins in our life that we are unaware of; we may call them hidden sins. But we should pray that God would reveal these sins that we may confess them and forsake them.

John makes it clear that believers may fall into sin. They may commit sinful acts. When we do, we are to confess our sins and then believe that He will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession should be specific as God reveals specific sins in our life. We are not simply to admit our sinfulness, but we should confess the sinful act. An unwillingness to be specific may indicate an absence of true heartfelt repentance and a lack of a real desire to give up the sin.

Confession of sin should be made to God who is able to both forgive and cleanse. Not only is He able but He is faithful. God is sure to forgive, if man will truly confess. Faithfulness is one of the outstanding qualities of God’s character.

Let us consider some passages that refer to God's faithfulness:

1 Corinthians 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

God will commune with you. God's faithfulness is associated with His call for fellowship. God will do His part in drawing close to man. God will do His part in being faithful in sharing Himself with us. If there is any separation between us and God, it will be due to failure on our part.

1 Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

God will faithfully provide all the power necessary to overcome temptation.

1 Thessalonians 5:22, 24 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

God will be faithful in His work to prepare us for Christ's soon return. He has called us to be sanctified and He will empower us to be sanctified.

2 Timothy 2:13 "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

God will faithfully work upon every human heart, but He will not force the will. God is love and He cannot deny Himself. He will faithfully and lovingly try to reach every precious soul for His kingdom.

Hebrews 10:23, 24 "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:"

Millions of God's professed people have forfeited peace because they have doubted God's faithfulness. But every promise of God is sure. If He faithfully fulfilled His promise to give us His only begotten Son, then He will surely keep every other promise. As we consider God's faithfulness, may it lead us to faithfully encourage one another to love and serve others.

Verse 9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If we confess our sins, then God will both "forgive us of our sins" and "cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But what does it mean to confess our sins?

First, there needs to be an acknowledgement of sin. If we do not acknowledge that we have done wrong, then there will be no true confession of sin.

Second, with a humble heart we are to confess our sins to God. Never are we to confess our sins in a flippant or irreverent way. We are asking pardon from the Creator of heaven and earth.

Third, we are to confess our sins with heartfelt repentance, regretting that we had committed such sins. If we are not truly repentant, have we truly confessed them? The psalmist wrote, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:18

And lastly, confession should be specific, acknowledging the very sins we have committed.

Does God want to forgive me of my sins?

The Bible says that God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Does God really want me to be cleansed?

The apostle Paul wrote that Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25-27

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Jesus "gave Himself" for us that we might be cleansed. We are to be cleansed "by the word" and presented to the heavenly Father as a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The "will of God" is our "sanctification."

The word "sanctification" means to make holy. It is God's will that we are both forgiven and cleansed, that we may become that glorious church.

But what if I confess my sins and I keep on committing the same sins? Does this mean that there is something wrong with God and His promise?

Since God is faithful the problem must lie with my confession. Would you agree?

Is it possible for a person to want to be forgiven but not changed?

A person may want to be forgiven for their angry words, but they still want to hang onto their ugly feelings. A person may want to be forgiven for adultery or fornication, but he still wants to hang on to immoral thoughts and practices.

It would seem evident that there is a true confession of sin that leads to both forgiveness and cleansing, and there is a confession of sin that leaves us unchanged.

What does it mean to be cleansed?

“The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from his terrible disease is an illustration of His work in cleansing the soul from sin. The man who came to Jesus was ‘full of leprosy.’ Its deadly poison permeated his whole body. The disciples sought to prevent their Master from touching him; for he who touched a leper became himself unclean. But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement. His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed. Thus it is with the leprosy of sin,—deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by human power. ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.’ Isaiah 1:5, 6. But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,” shall hear the answer, “I will; be thou made clean.” Matthew 8:2, 3, R. V. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 266

To be cleansed from sin is like the leper being cleansed from leprosy. We cannot cleanse ourselves, but God is more than able to cleanse us from every disease and every sin.

What is the relationship between our nearness to Christ and the cleansing process?

“Solemnly Christ said to Peter, ‘If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.’ The service which Peter refused was the type of a higher cleansing. Christ had come to wash the heart from the stain of sin. In refusing to allow Christ to wash his feet, Peter was refusing the higher cleansing included in the lower. **He was really rejecting his Lord.** It is not humiliating to the Master to allow Him to work for our purification. The truest humility is to receive with thankful heart any provision made in our behalf, and with earnestness do service for Christ...At the words, ‘If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me,’ Peter surrendered his pride and self-will. **He could not endure the thought of separation from Christ;** that would have been death to him. ‘Not my feet only,’ he said, ‘but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.’” Ibid., 646

We want to be cleansed from sin because that draws us closer to Jesus. It is sin that separates us from God. By allowing God to cleanse us we are throughout the cleansing process drawing closer to Him.

Is there a connection between trials and our cleansing from all unrighteousness?

“God sends trials to prove who will stand faithful under temptation. He brings us into trying positions to see if we will trust in a power out of and above ourselves. Everyone has undiscovered traits of character that must come to light through trial. God allows those who are self-sufficient to be sorely tempted that they may understand their helplessness. He suffers the deep waters of affliction to go over our souls, in order that we may know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, in order that we may have deep heart longings to be cleansed from defilement, and may come forth from the trial purer, holier, happier. Often we enter the furnace of affliction with our souls darkened with selfishness; but if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine character. When His purpose in the affliction is

accomplished 'he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday'" (Psalm 37:6). Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Place*, 279

Prophecy and our cleansing

There is a Bible prophecy that specifically points to a special cleansing work by our High Priest, Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Daniel 8:14

This great prophecy that covers the great expanse of 2300 years (for a "day" represents a "year" in Bible prophecy), points to the time when Jesus will enter into the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. There He will perform that special work of cleansing His people from all unrighteousness. "He is pleading the case of the tempted, the erring, and the faithless. He is striving to lift them into companionship with Himself. **It is His work to sanctify His people, to cleanse, ennoble, and purify them, and fill their hearts with peace.** He is thus fitting them for glory, honor, and eternal life; for an inheritance richer and more lasting than that of any earthly prince...Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. **While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth.** This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14." Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, 327; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 425

When we are cleansed what will we see?

"When the lives of God's people are cleansed from moral and spiritual pollution; when their eyes are anointed with the heavenly eyesalve, they will see that they are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Ellen G. White, *This Day With God*, 328

We are to behold His perfection that we might see our imperfection. And when this sinner is transformed into a saint, he will not speak of his own righteousness, but of the love and righteousness of His Redeemer.

Cleansing and a New Creature

The Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor 5:17 Does this sound like the process of cleansing?

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Colossians 3:8-10

In this new life we "put off" the old life of anger, jealousy, and crude jesting. By putting them off by the grace of God we are being cleansed of those sins. Therefore, we could say that to "put off" anger is to be "cleansed" of anger?

If I have confessed my sins, why do I still struggle and fall into sin?

In answering this question, I would like us to look at a few verses in Romans chapter seven. Consider these inspired texts, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do...O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:18, 19, 24.

This struggling man knows what is right, he even wants to do what is right, but he does not know how.

We find that he acknowledges that God's law is holy, but that he is carnal, sold under sin, saying, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good...For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." Romans 7:12, 14.

The problem is not with God's Ten Commandments. The problem is with us. We were born with a carnal or fallen nature with the inclination to sin. But God has promised, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

Consider these promises:

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Romans 6:13

So what is the problem?

For many professed Christians, they have only confessed the sins they have committed. But let us ask ourselves another question, "Why did we commit those sins?" The problem is with our sinful nature.

Jesus said, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:17-19.

In these words of Jesus, we see that the real problem is not with the bad fruit, but with the bad tree. We can continue to ask God to forgive us of our bad fruit, but what do we really need to do? We need to ask God to forgive us and cleanse us from the evil inside of us.

For example, if I am dealing with a quick temper, then I need to ask God to forgive me for my angry words and impatience. But there is more. I need to ask God to chop down the bad tree that caused me to speak those unkind words. Otherwise, the quick temper that remains in me will keep producing the bad fruit of angry words and impatience.

There is more. I need to ask for the love and patience of Jesus. I must be more than forgiven and cleansed, I must be renewed into the image of Jesus. What do I need? I need the sweet and peaceful spirit of Jesus to replace my quick temper. In this way, I can now produce the good fruit of kind, courteous, and uplifting words.

“There are many who try to correct the life of others by attacking what they consider are wrong habits. They go to those whom they think are in error, and point out their defects. They say, ‘You don't dress as you should.’ They try to pick off the ornaments, or whatever seems offensive, but they do not seek to fasten the mind to the truth. Those who seek to correct others should present the attractions of Jesus. They should talk of His love and compassion, present His example and sacrifice, reveal His Spirit, and they need not touch the subject of dress at all. There is no need to make the dress question the main point of your religion. There is something richer to speak of. Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off. It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree. The leaves will reappear. The ax must be laid at the root of the tree, and then the leaves will fall off, never to return....In order to teach men and women the worthlessness of earthly things, you must lead them to the living Fountain, and get them to drink of Christ, until their hearts are filled with the love of God, and Christ is in them, a well of water springing up into everlasting life... Cleanse the fountain, and the streams will be pure. If the heart is right, your words, your dress, your acts, will all be right.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 272

Nature of Man

“When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan. There exists naturally no enmity between sinful man and the originator of sin. Both became evil through apostasy.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 505

“Connected with Christ, human nature becomes pure and true.” Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, 35

“The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need.” Ellen G. White, *Education*, 29

What are the evil tendencies that we are born with?

“Satan strengthens the destructive tendencies of man's nature. He brings in envy, jealousy, selfishness, covetousness, emulation, and strife for the highest place.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 6, 238

“There is in the nature of man, when not under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, a disposition to envy, jealousy, and cruel distrust, which, if not subdued, will lead to a desire to undermine and tear down others, while selfish spirits will seek to build themselves up upon their ruins.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 3, 343

“There is but one power that can break the hold of evil from the hearts of men, and that is the power of God in Jesus Christ. Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace

alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature." Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 428

As I consider the above quotes, it seems, that the bad trees in our life are the bad tree of envy, the bad tree of jealousy, the bad tree of selfishness, the bad tree of covetousness, the bad tree of strife, and many more. These bad trees cause us to produce bad fruit. These bad trees must be cut down and replace by the good tree found in Christ's perfect and sinless life.

Here is how true confession works:

1. I confess that I have spoken words that were unkind, and I ask God to forgive me.
2. I then ask God to cleanse me of the evil inside of me that caused me to speak evil words.
3. I then ask God to share with me the kind, courteous, and uplifting words of Jesus.

The Prayer for Cleansing

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24

What an important prayer for us to pray every day. If we are truly cooperating with God to be cleansed, then we will ask Him to reveal to us any sinful tendencies that still need to be rooted out.

If the Holy Spirit reveals some new sin in my life, then does that mean that I have never been converted?

If the Holy Spirit has revealed to me a sin that I was not aware of, then it tells me that God is proceeding with His glorious work of cleansing me from all unrighteousness.

When the Holy Spirit does reveal that wickedness in me, I do need to make a choice. I need to choose to follow God's perfect will as was perfectly demonstrated in the life of Jesus. I will want Him (1) to forgive me of such an evil tendency in my life, (2) to cleanse me of that evil tendency, and (3) to replace it with the loveliness of Jesus.

The Exercise of the Will

"Pure religion has to do with the will. The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway...It is for you to yield up your will to the will of Jesus Christ; and as you do this, God will immediately take possession and work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Your whole nature will then be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ, and even your thoughts will be subject to Him...Talk faith. Keep on God's side of the line. Set not your foot on the enemy's side, and the Lord will be your helper. He will do for you that which it is not possible for you to do for yourself. The result will be that you will become "like a cedar in Lebanon." Your life will be noble, and your works will be wrought in God. There will be in you a power, an earnestness, and a simplicity that will make you a polished instrument in the hands of God. Is it your purpose to do God's will? Do you wish to obey the Scriptures? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me..."

There is no such thing as following Christ unless you refuse to gratify inclination and determine to obey God." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 5, pages 513-515

Do you remember when Jesus healed the man who had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years? Jesus said to the paralytic, "'Wilt thou be made whole?' The impotent man answered him, 'Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath." John 5:6-9.

The man did not ask Jesus to heal him first. He chose to obey Christ's words believing that he would be healed. As he rose he was healed.

Other examples

Luke 17:14—It was as the ten lepers obeyed Jesus' command that they were healed.

Joshua 3:13—It was as they stepped forth into the Jordan River that the waters were parted.

As soon as we resolve to obey God's Word, He supplies the strength to obey.

Philippians 4:13, reads, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

In the building of faith, we must learn to cooperate with God. He does not do everything for us, nor do we do everything by ourselves. Rather, we can do all things through Him that provides us the strength to fulfill His perfect will.

The choosing is ours, but the power is God's.

How can I discover my hidden sins that I might be both forgiven and cleansed?

The Bible says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:9-11

The apostle Paul would have us focus on the precious promises of God to experience the cleansing power of His Word, saying, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1

When we study the Bible, we must mesh our study with this prayer of the psalmist, saying, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Psalm 51:2

Verse 10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

In verse 10, John again reminds us of the great deception of saying that "we have not sinned." In doing so, we make God a liar. The Bible is clear that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23. Since this epistle is addressed to Christians, some within the church must have been claiming that they had not sinned.

As we draw closer to Christ, we will realize how much more we depend upon Him. We will not be proclaiming our own righteousness, rather we will be rejoicing in His righteousness.

Chapter Two of First John

2:1 “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”

In the opening verse of chapter two, John addresses the believers as “little children.” This does not have so much to do with age or size, but the fact that we all share the same heavenly Father. And because there is no real break between chapters one and two, we would understand his words, “These things,” as applying to the content of chapter one if not to the entire book. In either case, he does not want the believers to come away with the thought that it is okay to sin. In fact, John would encourage his believing audience to avoid committing even a single act of sin. This is not a contradiction of chapter 1:10, whereby John warns against claiming freedom from sin. We have all sinned, and we are all tempted to sin. However, we do not need to continue in sin. As John wrote in 3:10, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known him.”

Although the goal is to do all things that are pleasing to God, a Christian may fall into sin. John’s purpose in this argument is not to condone sin, but to point us to the Sinless One who empowers us to live the victorious Christian life.

“We have an Advocate.” Usually this title is used in reference to the Holy Spirit, but in this verse it is in reference to Christ. Christ is the Mediator between God and man. He is also our Advocate in heaven. He pleads our case. He offers His blood as the ransom for our sins. He qualifies as our Advocate by His sinless life and His divinity.

2:2 “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

He is the “propitiation for our sins.” God does not need to be appeased, for while we were yet sinners, God sent His only Son to die for our sins. However, God is just, and the wages of sin is death. See Romans 6:23

The penalty must be paid. “Jesus Christ the righteous” has paid that price. He has offered His own blood for the removal of our sins, but not only our sins. He died for the sins of the whole world. See John 1:29; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9.

The sins of every man, woman, and child were placed upon the Savior. However, this does not mean universal salvation, for the Bible is clear that salvation is an individual matter, and each person must accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

2:3 “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

This verse could have been written, “And hereby, if we keep His commandments, we know that we still know Him.”

What do we know? Based on the context of the verse, we know that Jesus is our Advocate and Propitiation. We personally know that He is interceding for us, and we know that He has died for us. This experiential knowledge is what motivates us to keep His commandments. And in turn, the power we receive to keep His commandments is evidence that we do know Him.

2:4 “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The believer who is keeping the commandments is revealing to other fellow Christians that he knows God. Even so, we are not justified by keeping the law. We are saved by grace through faith. See Titus 3:5, 8

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph 2:8, 9

Good works are not designed to earn salvation, but are profitable for our abiding in Christ.

“He that saith,” would be in reference to those who have been influenced by these heresies; and it refers to those who claim to know Christ while disregarding His commandments. There was no excuse for these deceptive teachings to take hold in the church, for Jesus had clearly taught that he who is willing to receive the truth will have it revealed to him (John 7:17), and that those who truly love Him will keep His commandments (John 14:15-17).

As Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:15-17

But he that claims to know Christ and disregards His commandments “is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Many believe that there is the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They believe that Christ came and died on the cross. But this must be more than a creed. We are to know not just the historical facts about Jesus, but we are to know the power of His resurrection. And it is in the power of His resurrection that makes it possible for us to keep His commandments. Without that power there is no possible way we could obey any of God’s commands.

We are to know Him and reveal that we know Him. This revelation will be revealed by a life changed by the power of God into the altogether beautiful image of Jesus Christ.

2:5 “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”

John uses the phrase “love of God” in at least these two ways, namely, God’s love for man (1 John 4:9; John 3:16, 17; 4:14, 16), and man’s love for God.

All true love comes from God, and he who is motivated to keep God's commandments does so by virtue of the love that is derived from God. Through God's love we are both motivated and empowered to keep His commandments. As we grow in this loving obedience to God's commands we are being perfected into the likeness of Christ. "Hereby know we that we are in Him."

As we are motivated and empowered by God's love to keep His commands, we have evidence that we are beginning to walk as He walked. We have the evidence that we are "in Him." We have the evidence that we are growing as disciples of Christ.

2:6 "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

"He that saith," would be in reference to all who profess Christ.

John makes frequent use of the Greek word "meno" from which we have translated "abideth" and "to remain." John makes use of this word 41 times in his Gospel and 26 times in his Epistles.

While it is used in reference to the union between the Father and the Son (John 14:10), it is used in our union with Christ (John 15:4-10; 1 John 2:24, 28; 3:6, 24). Consider the following uses of the word "abideth" in the writings of John:

John 15:4-7

15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast [them] into the fire, and they are burned.

15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Here we find "abiding" associated with bearing much fruit. We also find it associated with prayer. The more we abide in Christ the more we will become like Him, the more we will produce the fruits of righteousness, and the more we will pray according to His perfect will.

1 John 2:24

2:24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Here we find "abiding" associated with Christ and His Word remaining in us. This happens as we "continue in the Son."

1 John 2:28

2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Here we find "abiding" associated with having confidence at the Lord's appearing. Since we have come to know Him, we desire to see Him face-to-face.

1 John 3:6

3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Here we find “abiding” with overcoming sin. Our fellowship with Him is the only way we can have victory. Yet some teach that overcoming sin is not possible. If this is true, then there is no way we can come to know Him and the power of His resurrection. But the Bible teaches otherwise.

1 John 3:24

3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Here we find “abiding” associated with keeping His commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Obvious the word “abideth” has a practical meaning as it concerns the everyday life of the Christian. For example, through our “abiding in Him” we ought to “walk, even as He walked.” In His earthly life, Jesus left for us a perfect example of how to live by the power of God.

Of course, when we first come to Christ we will not do all that Jesus did. But day-by-day we can become more like Him. It is the work of a life time, but we can put on Christ each and every day. While knowledge of His perfect life is a logically prerequisite in following Him; it is more that knowledge. We do need to choose to follow. It will always be our choice, but it is always be by His power.

Let us continue our study in 1 John 2:7-11

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

2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Verses 7-11 are a new section that deals with love for the brethren. Hence, John begins this section with the endearing term, “Brethren.”

“New” can be thought of as in quality or in age. In verse 7 it seems to have more to do with quality, while in verse 8 it seems to have more to do with age with the usage of the word “old.”

John is not giving a new kind of commandment because whatever God had given us in the past was more than adequate, in fact, it would have been perfect since it came from God. The new commandment to love one another was spoken of by Jesus. See John 13:34

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John 13:34

Jesus did more than proclaim it, He demonstrated it. In fact, no one had ever demonstrated such love since the beginning of time. Paul argued that "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6-8

It would seem from these words of Paul that men had not even conceived of such a love. Who had ever thought of someone dying for the ungodly? However, the Sinless One, Jesus Christ, would demonstrate what love is all about; and this same self-sacrificing love is to be in us.

"From the beginning," means from the beginning of the hearer's Christian experience. He has already heard this commandment. As we grow in Him it will mean more and more to us. As we keep His commandments by grace, we will have a deepening sense of sin and a greater thankfulness to God for His redeeming love. As we gain spiritual eyesight, as we become more like Him, we will appreciate all the more so, how He who hated sin with a perfect hatred chose to take upon Himself the sins of the whole world. This is LOVE!

The opening word in verse eight, "Again," will help provide an increased understanding of the "new" commandment. If the "old" was sufficient, then the fault is with man. Men have obscured the truth of love by false doctrines. This can be seen in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, whereby He explained the truth of His commandments that had been obscured by the Pharisees. Christ's explanation of His commandments was fresh and new to the hearers who had been misled by the religious leaders.

The commandment was "true in Him" because Jesus actually kept them. He kept them perfectly. John tells us that they are also "true in you" because we are now able to keep them by His abiding presence. Because of this the "darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." What a wonderful taste of the world to come. We have hope because the Light has already come. That light is in us as we walk in that light. And soon all darkness will be dispelled by this Light of love. Hatred will come to an end. False teachers will come to an end. False doctrines will come to an end. While we are in the light that dawned in the ministry and death of Jesus, the time will soon come when all things will become new. Revelation 21

2.9 "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now"

When John opens this verse with "He that saith," he is referring back to these heretical teachings. In combating these false teachings, he has already contrasted light with darkness (1 John 1:5-7; 2:8) and truth with falsehood (1 John 1:8-10; 2:4). Now he deals similarly with love and hate (1 John 2:9-11).

John clearly explains that he who claims spiritual enlightenment yet harbors hatred for a fellow believer clearly demonstrates that he is dwelling "in darkness even until now."

The degree of hatred is not stated. Sometimes hatred is clearly expressed in words and actions. Sometimes it is hid from the sight of others, yet unkind thoughts and feelings are harbored in the heart.

That John is speaking about hating a fellow believer is actuated by the words "hateth his **brother**." This is a term most often used amongst believers in Christ.

Can hatred spring up in the Christian's heart? Of course it can. The question is what we do with that hatred. Do we give it to Jesus and ask for forgiveness? We should. Is that all we should do? Absolutely not! We should ask for Christ's love for that person. Then the love of Jesus can flow through us towards that person. This is the essence of fellowship, namely, *koinonia* with Jesus.

2:10, 11

2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

In these two verses we see the effects of light and darkness. Light enables someone to love his brother. Darkness blinds the eyes.

God is Light and God is love, therefore, the brother who loves his unloving brother demonstrates that he knows God and is dwelling in the light of God's presence.

The man in darkness thinks he knows where he is going, but he does not—he is blind. The rejection of light and hatred towards a brother causes spiritual blindness.

Let us now consider 1 John 2:12-14

2:12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

2:13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

"Little children" would include all believers. These are believers who have already experience the forgiveness of sins "for His name's sake." In verse 13, the "little children" are said to know the Father, whom they know by knowing the Son.

"Fathers" would be those who have walked in the light for many years and have matured spiritually. These "fathers" experientially know Him. This may also be in reference to those who were with Jesus from the beginning. They were not part of the original twelve but they nonetheless followed Jesus and remained faithful.

"Young men" are strong in faith because the Word of God abides in them. The evidence that the Word abides in them is seen in their victory over sin and the wicked one—Satan.

Let us consider 1 John 2:15-17

2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

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

2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

We are to love the things of nature and learn rich lessons from the book of nature. However, we are not to love those tainted things in this fallen world that diminishes our love to God, such as, selfishness and strife.

Our fallen world is truly at enmity with God. We are not speaking about rocks and flowers, but the selfish heart of man.

Houses, friends, careers, and money are not necessarily evil, but when we place them before God in our affections, we do make an idol of them. The opinions of the world are foolishness compared to the wisdom of God.

While we may error in loving the world more than God, He will always love us.

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

The lust of the flesh would include all strong desires for indulging in those things forbidden of God or which are contrary to His expressed will and character.

“Lust of the flesh” may have more to do with the sins of the body, while the “lust of the eyes” may have more to do with sins that are initiated by sight or mental pleasures. For example, a person may not choose to commit an outward act of adultery, but they may do so by viewing pornography and by contemplating adultery in his thoughts.

The “pride of life” includes boastful displays whether by word or show. Their boasts center around materialistic things, their possessions, perhaps their positions, or beauty, or talents. In any case, these things are placed above spiritual things.

All these things are “not of the Father,” in that God is not in them and did not originate them. Satan originated self-centeredness.

2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Those who center their life around sinful pleasures will forfeit eternal life and will perish with this old world. But he who does the will of God may die in this world, but he will receive eternal life and the inheritance of the Earth made new.

Antichrist

Let us continue with 1 John 2:18-29

2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but [they went out], that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

2:24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

“It is the last time.” In view of the world passing away with all its lusts, the believer should live everyday as one anticipating the nearness of Christ’s return.

“Ye have heard” means that the subject of “antichrist” was often mentioned and discussed. There are many references to the antichrist power, but only in the epistles of John do we find the word “antichrist.”
1John 2:22; 4:3; 2John 7

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

1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2 John 7 “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Study on Antichrist

Some teach that antichrist lived only in the past. Some teach that antichrist lives only in the future. Others teach that an antichrist power has existed throughout the Christian dispensation. Some say that antichrist is an atheist. Some say that he comes from within the Christian community. But what does the Bible say?

Many Christians have not spent much time thinking about whom and what is antichrist. However, a great deal of literature on the subject has antichrist described as some singular diabolical figure living only in these last days. In the *Left Behind* series, antichrist is fictitiously portrayed as “one of the most powerful

and charismatic personalities ever." *The Tribulation Force*, p. ix. He is depicted as an individual coming to power after Christians have been secretly raptured out of the world. He seizes power through the United Nations and then establishes a one-world government. The world will then openly worship him as God.

But is this what the Bible teaches about antichrist? Is antichrist a singular individual? Does antichrist only live in the end of time? Is antichrist someone who comes outside of the Christian community?

Let us first begin by looking at the word "anti-christ," which comes from two Greek words, "antee" and "khristos."

"Antee" means "opposite." It is often used in the sense of competition and denotes "contrast, . . . substitution. . ." *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Greek Dictionary, entries Nos. 500, 473.

And "khristos" is the Greek word for Christ.

So "antichrist" is in competition with Christ. He presents himself as a substitute of Christ. So what does antichrist want us to do? He wants us to go to him, instead of going to Christ. He is in competition with Christ. He sets himself up as Christ.

Does Jesus have a substitute or representative while He is in heaven? The answer is "Yes."

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you...But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:16, 17, 26

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13, 14

Christ's true Representative is the Holy Spirit. It is not a human being. But antichrist is a human being who sets himself up as Christ's substitute.

Let us now look up the verses that use the word "antichrist" or "antichrists." There are only five such passages and they are all found in 1 and 2 John.

1 John 2:18, 19

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John 2:18, 19

Let us consider some of the facts from these verses.

1. The early Christians had heard that antichrist shall come.
2. They were told that even now there are many antichrists.

3. John tells them that these antichrists went out from us, but that they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

Many Christians have been told that antichrist refers to a singular man, but John says that there are “many antichrists.”

Some teach that antichrist lived only in the past, but John said “antichrist shall come.” Some teach that antichrist lives only in the future, but John said “there are many antichrists.”

Some teach that antichrist is an atheist, but we learn that antichrist was actually within the Christian church, as John said “they went out from us.”

It is evident that antichrist represents an apostate Christianity, for John says, “if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

This certainly fits the meaning of the term “antichrist,” as one who tries to establish himself as a substitute of Christ.

1 John 2:22, 23, 26

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. . . These things have I written unto you concerning them that **seduce** you.” 1 John 2:22, 23, 26

Here we learn that antichrist “denieth that Jesus is the Christ.” How does antichrist deny Jesus as the Messiah? He does so seducingly or deceptively. John wrote, “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you...For many **deceivers** are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a **deceiver** and an antichrist.” 1 John 2:26; 2 John 7

Antichrist is a deceiver. He will mix truth with error. He will talk about Jesus as the Christ in one place, but then will add some sort of error or falsehood in another place. But we have another clue. We are told that he “denieth the Father and the Son.” Does this mean that antichrist denies the existence of the Father and the Son? Not likely. Remember he is presenting himself as a substitute for Christ.

What antichrist denies is that the only way to the Father is through the Son. But the Bible says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” 1 Timothy 2:5. There is only one Mediator between God and man. It is Jesus.

Why is Jesus the only Mediator? Jesus is both God and man. The Son of God became the Son of man. Therefore, He is able to represent God to man, and man to God. He is the only One that can do that.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6. There is only one way to the Father. It is through Jesus. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

This is one of the most important foundational truths concerning Jesus as the Christ, the Savior of the world. We find salvation only through Christ. There is no such thing as salvation through any other person or means. But antichrist does not teach this. Antichrist has developed a religious system that includes other persons and means for salvation. Remember, antichrist establishes himself as a substitute for Christ. In a little bit, we will look at a verse that shows that antichrist is setting himself up as God within the Christian community.

Remember, antichrist teaches these things deceptively. There will be statements by antichrist where he says that salvation is only through Christ. But then they contradict this by pointing people to other personages as lesser mediators, but they are nonetheless mediators. But the Bible teaches that there is only one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

1 John 4:3, 4; 2 John 7

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4:3, 4

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 7

What do we learn from these texts?

1. Antichrist does not deny that Christ came in flesh, he denies that Christ came in “the flesh,” meaning our fallen flesh.
2. John reaffirms that antichrist shall come and that “the spirit of antichrist” is “even now already” in the world.
3. One of the main characteristics of antichrist is that he is a “deceiver.” He mixes truth and error together.

How did Jesus come in flesh?

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2:14, 16, 17

Paul teaches us that Christ put on the same flesh that you and I have. In fact, Paul said that God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:” Romans 8:3

To rescue man from sin, Christ came in our flesh, “in the likeness of sinful flesh” and condemned sin in our fallen flesh by living a sinless life. He became a partaker of our “flesh and blood.” He was “made like unto his brethren.” He “took on him the seed of Abraham.” He did this to save us from our sinful natures. He saved man where man was. Hence, He took on human nature after 4,000 years of sin. The opening

chapter of the New Testament goes to great lengths showing the genealogy of Christ; that He did receive the same flesh that we have.

Then that blessed day came when “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Matthew 1:23

Imagine that, the Son of God joins the human race. He puts on our flesh. Where did He get this flesh? He got it from Mary. Mary had the same flesh as you and me. She must have been a very dedicated young lady to have been chosen as the mother for Jesus. But like all of us, she too was in need of a Savior. As Mary herself said, “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.” Luke 1:47.

There are very few words recorded concerning Mary, but these words are very clear. She too needed a Savior. As the Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” Romans 3:23

This is an important point because the divinity and the humanity of Jesus mean everything to us. If Christ became one of us and “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” (Hebrews 4:15) then Jesus serves as our example. But if Jesus had put on holy flesh and was not even tempted to sin, then Jesus cannot be our example.

Antichrist deceptively denies that Christ came in our fallen flesh. Antichrist will say that Christ had our flesh in one statement, but then contradicts himself in another statement. More on this point later.

So now we come to the question, “How does antichrist exist in John’s day and yet be predicted to come in the future?” It would seem that we are not simply talking about one person, but a system.

John spoke about the “spirit of antichrist.” Consider these words of John, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” 3 John 9-11

The “spirit of antichrist” is the desire for “preeminence.” Imagine someone in the early church working against the beloved John. Diotrephes “loveth to have the preeminence,” and worked to prevent John from being received in the church.

Paul wrote about this “spirit of antichrist” as well. Paul went from Miletus to Ephesus, “and called the elders of the church.” Acts 20:17. He said to them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves [you elders], and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you [elders], not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Acts 20:17, 28-31

Paul had gathered together the elders or overseers of the church. He said that amongst them were “grievous wolves” that would not spare the flock or church of God. Some would arise and speak perverse or false things to “draw away disciples” to follow themselves.

What do we have here? We have leaders in the church who will purposely speak perverse things to get men to follow them, instead of following Christ. This is in verity the “spirit of antichrist,” the desire for preeminence.

To accomplish this they would have to speak false things. They would have to present themselves as having the authority of God in the church.

Paul would speak directly about the antichrist power to the Thessalonians.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

In verse 1, Paul begins by referring to the “coming of the Lord.” This is in reference to the Second Coming of Christ.

In verse 2, Paul tells them not to be troubled by the teaching going around that Christ is returning immediately.

In verse 3, Paul assures them that the coming of Christ will not come until there is a “falling away first” in the church. In other words, there is going to be a major apostate element that will develop within the church. When it is fully developed, the “man of sin” will be revealed, “the son of perdition.” Who is this “man of sin”? It is none other than antichrist.

In verse 4, Paul tells us that antichrist “sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” In other words, antichrist is sitting in the church, within the Christian community, showing himself that he has the highest authority in the church. By exalting “himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped,” he is in opposition to God. This is exactly the meaning of the term “antichrist.” He sets himself up as a substitute of Christ, acting as if he had the authority of God within the church.

In verse 5, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he had shared these things with them before.

In verse 6, Paul tells them that they know who is withholding the antichrist power from being fully revealed. The Thessalonians knew that the pagan Roman Empire was withholding antichrist from coming to power. The Douay Bible says, “The Roman Empire, . . . was first to be destroyed before the coming of Antichrist.”—*Note on 2 Thessalonians 2:3*. As quoted from *Facts of Faith*, Southern Publishing Association, 1943 Edition, p. 203.

In verse 7, Paul tells them that the “mystery of iniquity doth already work.” In other words, the ground work of the antichrist power is already being developed. But when the current power is taken out of the way, then the man of sin will be revealed.

In verse 8, Paul tells them that the “Wicked” one will be revealed. Who is the “Wicked” one? It is the “man of sin.” It is antichrist.

The term “Wicked” comes from the Greek word “anomos.” It describes someone who is lawless, someone who is not subject to the law of God. He is a transgressor. The great sin of antichrist is that he sets himself up as if he is God within the church. He is also guilty of seriously transgressing God’s law. But you say, “But hasn’t everybody broken God’s law?” And the answer is, “Yes.” But antichrist has broken them by declaring that he has the power to change God’s law. “And he [antichrist, the little horn power] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” Daniel 7:25

The little horn power of Daniel chapter seven has long been identified as the antichrist power of Bible prophecy. Notice in the above verse that he thinks he has the power “to change times and laws.” He thinks he has that power, but he does not. This is a serious matter, because he is deceiving others to keep his version of the Ten Commandments, instead of how God wrote them with His own finger. Remember, antichrist is in competition with Christ as he endeavors to set himself up as having the authority of Christ.

In the end, the “Wicked” will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s Second Coming.

Let us review. The Thessalonians were being told by some that Christ was coming back right away. Then Paul tells them, “No, Jesus is not coming back immediately. There are some things that have to happen first. There will be a falling away in the church. There will be the true church and there will be this false church. The false church will be led by the ‘man of sin,’ the antichrist of Bible prophecy. He will set himself up as if he had the authority of God within the Christian community. This ‘mystery of iniquity’ is already at work. It cannot come to power right away. There is a power already in place that you are very aware of. It is the Roman Empire. Until the Roman Empire is out of the way, the antichrist power cannot take the reigns of power. But when he does take the reigns, it will be demonstrated that he is that ‘Wicked’ one, the one who is in opposition to God’s law. Christ will return after the reign of antichrist, and will destroy him with the brightness of His coming.”

So who is antichrist?

The great Bible scholars of the Protestant Reformation like John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Huss, William Tyndale, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and many others identified the Roman power, the Papacy, as the antichrist of Bible prophecy.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), ratified and established by an act of British Parliament, declared, “There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God.” Phillip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, With a History of Critical Notes*. New York: Harper & Brothers, vol. III, chap. 25. Sec 6. Page 658, 659.

Martin Luther wrote, “. . . God’s word . . . convinces me sufficiently that the Pope is the Antichrist, and the ecclesiastical orders are his disciples which deceive the whole world. I hope that the last day is at the door. Things could not become worse than the Roman See makes it. It suppresses the commandments of God, it exalts its own commandments above God’s.” *Luther Reformatory Works*, p. 280.

So how would the Papacy react to this widespread belief that they were the antichrist power of Bible prophecy?

Pastor Joseph Tanner wrote, “So great hold did the conviction that the Papacy was the Antichrist gain upon the minds of men, that Rome at last saw she must bestir herself, and try, by putting forth other systems of interpretation, to counteract the identification of the Papacy with the Antichrist.

“Accordingly, towards the close of the century [the 16th century] of the Reformation, two of her most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end; namely, that of diverting men’s minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the papal system. The Jesuit Alcasar devoted himself to bring into prominence the Preterist method of interpretation, . . . that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the papal power by bringing out the Futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years. Thus, as Alford says, the Jesuit Ribera, about A.D. 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the Futurist system in modern times.

“It is a matter for deep regret that those who hold and advocate the Futurist system at the present day, Protestants as they are for the most part, are thus really playing into the hands of Rome, and helping to screen the Papacy from detection as the Antichrist. It has been well said that ‘Futurism tends to obliterate the brand put by the Holy Spirit upon popery.’ More especially is this to be deplored at a time when the papal Antichrist seems to make an expiring effort to regain his former hold on men’s minds. Now once again, as at the Reformation, it is especially necessary that his true character should be recognized, by all who would be faithful to ‘the testimony of Jesus.’” -*Daniel and Revelation*, pp. 16, 17. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898. As quoted from *Facts of Faith*, Southern Publishing Association, pp. 201, 202.

We know that Alcasar is incorrect by placing antichrist prior to the first century. He taught that Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled in the second century B.C., was the antichrist of Bible prophecy. None of the Bible writers referred to antichrist as being in the past. They said that they are many antichrists and that antichrist shall appear.

We know that Ribera is wrong because he places antichrist as a singular individual who only lives in the future. But the Bible writers expressed that the “mystery of iniquity” and “the man of sin,” was already at work.

Is the Papacy the antichrist of Bible prophecy as the Reformers declared? Let us check the facts.

We were told that the “spirit of antichrist” existed in the first century and that it would come to power after the fall of the pagan Roman Empire.

Did the Church of Rome exist in the first century?

There was no Church of Rome as we know it today. We do not find Catholic doctrine in the New Testament at all. The Bible does not teach such Catholic doctrine as indulgences, prayers to Mary and the saints, the position of a pope, the mass as the literal flesh and blood of Jesus, confession of sins to a Catholic priest, and all other false doctrines held by the Church of Rome. However, there were churches in the city of Rome. There were elders who had apostatized from the truth that characterized the spirit of antichrist. The antichrist system needed a beginning, and that beginning happened in the first century.

Did the Church of Rome come to power after the fall of the pagan Roman Empire?

Yes. After the Roman Empire ruled from 168 B.C. to 476 A.D., the Papacy was the next world empire coming to power in A.D. 538. “Out of the ruins of political Rome, arose the great moral Empire in the ‘giant form’ of the Roman Church.” A.C. Flick, *The Rise of Medieval Church*, 1909, page 150.

“Under the Roman Empire the popes had no temporal powers. But when the Roman Empire had disintegrated and its place had been taken by a number of rude, barbarous kingdoms, the Roman Catholic Church not only became independent of the states in religious affairs, but dominated secular affairs as well...The well-organized, unified, and centralized church, with the pope at its head, was not only independent in ecclesiastical affairs but also controlled civil affairs.” Carl Conrad Eckhardt, *The Papacy and World Affairs*, The University of Chicago Press, 1937, 1.

Was the Church of Rome part of the Christian community?

Yes. She had left the truth and began an apostate church.

Does the Papacy claim that Christ came in flesh? Yes. So what is the problem?

Consider the following statement about the birth of Mary. “We define that the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception. . . was preserved free from every taint of original sin. Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin.” *Faith of Our Fathers*, Cardinal Gibbons, pp. 203, 204.

Now notice what they teach about the human nature of Jesus. “The Catholic doctrine, however, is that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in His divine nature eternally begotten of the Father, took to Himself from the womb of His Virgin Mother a human nature of the same substance as hers: and therefore the mother of that divine person, Jesus Christ, the God-man, is in very truth the mother of God.” *Question Box*, New York: The Columbus Press, 1909, p. 517

If Mary was given a nature “unlike the rest of the children of Adam. . . never subject to sin,” then what kind of nature did Jesus have? They say that Jesus “took to Himself from the womb of His Virgin Mother a human nature of the same substance as hers.” If Mary’s nature is different from ours, then Christ’s nature is different from ours. If His nature is different from ours, then He could not serve as our example.

But Peter wrote, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:" 1 Peter 2:21, 22.

Peter says that Christ is to be our example and that there was found no guile in His mouth. How are the saints described in these last days? "These are they which were not defiled with women [not defiled by false teachings within the church]; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:4, 5

How was it possible for them to overcome? It was because Jesus became one with us and defeated sin in our flesh that we might now walk in newness of life by His Spirit.

Does the Papacy deny that the only way to the Father is through Jesus? Does the Papacy claim to be a mediator between God and man?

Yes. Doctor Alphonsus de Liguori wrote, "Mary is all the hope of our salvation. . . All those who are saved, are saved solely by means of this divine mother; . . . the salvation of all depends upon preaching Mary." *Glories of Mary*, New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, pp. 195, 19, 20.

"Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), p. 252, #969.

"The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives. . . They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. Their intercession is their most exalted service in God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world." *Ibid.*, p. 645, #2683

"The priest has the power of the keys, or the power of delivering sinners from hell, of making them worthy of paradise, and of changing them from the slaves of Satan into the children of God. And God Himself is obliged to abide by the judgment of His priest. . . . The Sovereign Master of the universe only follows the servant by confirming in heaven all that the latter decides upon earth." *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, New York: Benziger Brothers, pp. 27, 28

"This same Catholic Faith, outside of which nobody can be saved, which I now freely profess and to which I truly adhere, the same I promise and swear to maintain and profess . . . until the last breath of life." *Roman Catholic Catechism*: Geiermann, pp. 103

"It is in the Church that the 'fulness of the means of salvation' has been deposited. It is in her that 'by the grace of God we acquire holiness.'" *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), p. 218, #824.

"By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 257, #986

“One who desires to obtain reconciliation with God and with the Church, must confess to a priest all the unconfessed grave sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience.” Ibid., p. 374, #1493

“When Christ’s faithful strive to confess all the sins that they can remember, they undoubtedly place all of them before the divine mercy for pardon. But those who fail to do so and knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest, . . .” Ibid., p. 365, #1456

“The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls.” Ibid., p. 246, #937

“The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation... There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.” Ibid., p. 292, #1129 and p. 289, #1113.

Does the Papacy claim to have the authority of God in the church?

“We hold upon the earth the place of God Almighty.” Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter of June 20, 1894.

“The most holy and most happy, who is the arbiter of heaven and the Lord of the earth, the successor of St. Peter, the anointed of the Lord, the Master of the universe, the Father of kings, the light of the world.” Written by Pope Martin V. *Giustianni’s Rome as It Is*, p. 181. As quoted from *Facts for the Times*, Review and Herald Publishing, Fourth edition, p. 47, 48.

“All the names which in the Scriptures are applied to Christ, by virtue of which it is established that He is over the church, all the same names are applied to the Pope.” Robert Bellarmine, *On the Authority of the Councils*, 1628 edition, chapter 17, 1, 266.

“The pope is of so great dignity and excellence, that he is not merely man, but as if God, and the vicar of God. The pope alone is called most holy...Divine monarch, and supreme emperor, and king of kings...The pope is of so great dignity and power, that he constitutes one and the same tribunal with Christ, so that whatsoever the pope does seems to proceed from the mouth of God...The pope is as God on earth.” Rev. William Arthur, *The Pope, the Kings, and the People*, vol. 1, 211

“Catholics, on the other hand, say the bible is not the sole rule of faith and nothing in the Bible suggests it was meant to be. In fact, the Bible indicates it is not to be taken by itself. The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly.” Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 134.

Does the Papacy claim to have the power to change God’s law?

“The pope has power to change times, to abrogate law, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ.” *Decretals, de Translat. Episcop. Cap.* As translated from *Facts for the Times*, Review and Herald Publishing, Fourth edition, p. 56.

“He [the pope] can pronounce sentences and judgments in contradiction to the right of nations, to the law of God and man...He can free himself from the commands of the apostle, he being then superior and from the rules of the Old Testament.” As translated from *Facts for the Times*, Review and Herald Publishing, Fourth edition, p. 55.

“Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept
“Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day—a change for which there is not Scriptural authority.” Stephan Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, 3rd edition, 174.

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act [the change of the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday]. And the act is the mark of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” *Faith of our Fathers*, p. 14.

In the Catholic Catechism they have done away with the second commandment forbidding the worship of idols. They changed the day of worship from the seventh-day to the first day of the week. And they divided the tenth commandment into two to make up for eliminating the second commandment.

So what does all this mean? If the Papacy is the antichrist of Bible prophecy, then it is the same as the first beast of Revelation chapter thirteen that the whole world will wonder after. John wrote, “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”
Revelation 13:3, 4

By wondering after and worshiping the beast, the world is also worshiping the dragon, Satan. How serious is this? “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:8. If you worship the beast, antichrist, you will be lost eternally.

There is more! John records, “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:9-11

What happens to those who do not worship the beast? “And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelation 13:15-17

What a religious crisis! I wish none of this was true. But you can see why I am so concerned about what churches are teaching about antichrist. If the churches are teaching a false message about antichrist, then they are following into antichrist’s trap. The Protestant world will be looking for some atheist to

take over the world. While at the same time they are clasping hands with the Roman power. By clasping hands with the Papacy they are helping antichrist to regain the power that she lost during the Dark Ages.

Pope visiting US Congress on Sept 25, UN on Sept 26

We are one day closer to the Battle of Armageddon, and tragically the Protestant world is empowering the man of sin. According to the prophecies, Protestants will be foremost in bringing the Papacy back to rule over the conscience of men. Why would Protestants do that? They do not know who antichrist is anymore. They have been deceived by an intentional false theory developed by the Jesuit priest, Francisco Ribera.

This situation is so serious with the antichrist power, the Church of Rome, that God says, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Revelation 18:4

Let us continue with 1 John 2:20-29

2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

But you, as believers, have an unction or baptism or anointing of the Father through the Holy Spirit, and you know all things essential for salvation. However, antichrist does not teach the essentials of salvation.

2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

John is not writing to them with new information, but is encouraging them to live by the truth. And we know that falsehoods and lies do not proceed from God. Lies come from Satan, the originator of lies. But if a person is not in Christ, if he is not born of God, he will believe a lie.

2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

There can be no more basic or foundational truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the only Savior of the world. But antichrist denies this most basic truth. He does not deny the existence of the Father and the Son, but he does deny that the only way to the Father is through the Son. Of course, he does so deceptively. Antichrist will present Mary as a way to God. But the Bible is clear, Mary is resting in the grave with all the other saints awaiting the resurrection of the just.

2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also].

If you deny the divinity of Jesus, then you really do not have the spirit of the Father. If you deny that the only way to the Father is through Christ, then you also do not have the Father. But he that recognizes that the Father did indeed give to the world His only begotten Son has the Father.

2:24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Antichrist has left the foundational truths given to the apostles. But we are to hold fast the faith that was pure from the beginning. We are to allow this truth to abide in us. We are to own it and live by it. And the truth will remain in us as we “continue in the Son.”

2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

The Father promised to the human race the gift of His Son. Jesus is the Promised One. In Him we have eternal life, and in Him alone.

2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

I have written to you about antichrist, because there are those who are trying to mislead you from the truth. They will try and seduce you to believe that Jesus had a different nature, they will try and seduce you to believe that you cannot overcome sin, and they will try and seduce you that there are other mediators between God and man.

2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

You have abided in Christ from the time you first received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This was when you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior. This same Holy Spirit will continue to lead you and teach you. He will not teach you lies, but only the truth, even as He has already taught you.

2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

So brethren, abide in Christ, so that when He appears the second time, you may have confidence. Those who do not abide in Christ will be ashamed of the many opportunities they failed to embrace in knowing Him who is the truth.

2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

If you know Christ experientially and are living in righteousness, with right thoughts, right motives, and right actions, then it is evident that you are born of Him.

Chapter Three of First John

3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

As John concludes chapter two with the anticipation of the coming of Christ and our new birth in Him, he is now enraptured with the love of the Father in calling us to be His sons and daughters.

While the Father knows you perfectly and has adopted you into His family, the world does not know you because they do not know the Father. If the world loved the Father, then they would love His Son and all who have accepted Jesus as their Savior. So do not be surprised if the world hates you for loving the Father.

3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

We are now the sons of God. We now live in “heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:6), but we are not yet made perfect. When He shall appear the second time we shall be changed. This mortal will put on immortality—and then we shall see Him in His immortal body.

When He appears there will be a group called the 144,000 who will reflect the image of Jesus fully. The image of God will have been restored.

3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Tied to our hope in Christ and in His sure return, we find the call to purity.

“Purifieth himself” does not mean that we can change our own heart. But there are things God calls us to do in our cooperation with Him to be purified.

Consider this passage, “And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.” John 11:55

Many Jews would have been looking for a spiritual refreshing by going to Jerusalem for the Passover. They hoped to gain strength by studying and worshiping with others of like faith. Yet we remember that we cannot earn salvation by pilgrimages to certain sites and ceremonies,

In the gospel of Jesus Christ we can earn nothing. Never will there come a time when God would owe us something. It is always a gift from above.

But we are to draw near to God as the Holy Spirit draws us. The Bible says, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” James 4:8

God is always near, but we must respond to the wooing of God to draw near to Him.

The Bible says that we are to be purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit, as it is written, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren,

see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1:22, 23

"Having purified your souls" means that the believer had consecrated himself in the past and is still being purified as he continues to walk in the Spirit. The evidence of this purifying experience is love for the brethren. How does this happen? We are allowing the "word of God" to abide in our hearts and carried out in the life.

But can a man purify himself?

Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:4, 5

Paul wrote that we are by nature the enemy of God, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7

But are we to cooperate with Divine power. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure." Philippians 2:12,13

The words "work out" do not imply salvation by works, but it is the willingness to see the work completed in you. The good works are the outworking of Divine grace.

If it is all done by Divine grace, then is it salvation with zero effort?

Consider this verses of Scripture:

"Strive to enter in" (Luke 13:24)

"Put off the old man" (Colossians 3:9)

"Lay aside every weight, run with patience" (Hebrews 12:1)

"Resist the devil" (James 4:7)

"Endure unto the end" (Matthew 24:13)

Salvation is not the works, but the grace of God must be worked out in your life. It springs from communion with Christ; it is motivated by His self-sacrificing love. We are to be led of the Spirit—whose work is to mold us into the image of Christ.

When Paul says "work out your own salvation" it means that salvation is a personal matter. No other person can work out your salvation for you.

"Fear and trembling" is not some fear of God, but a distrust in your ability to save yourself. Such fear leads to humility, which leads to a trust and dependency upon God.

"For it is God which worketh." The word "worketh" comes from the Greek word "energeo," which means "to put forth power." It is God who is energizing. Consider the following verses that focus on God's power, His "energeo":

1 Corinthians 12:6

“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which **worketh** all in all.”

Ephesians 1:11, 19, 20

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,”

The phrase “both to will and to do according to His good pleasure,” tells us that God provides the stimulus or motivation to accept Jesus as our Savior in the beginning of our Christian walk, and He also provides the power to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But God will not force you to accept Christ, nor will He force you to stay on the blood-stained path.

As we go back to 1 John 3:3, we find that we do have a part to play in cooperating with God. Our part demands diligent watching and prayer. Consider the following call to duty and watchfulness:

Ephesians 6:13-18

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

Revelation 3:3

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

All these verses teach us that if we continue to abide in Him we will be “pure as He is pure.” The standard for the Christian is Christlikeness. He gained the victory over sin in our fallen flesh that we might be victorious as well. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 1:21

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

Romans 8:1, 2

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Let us continue our study with 1 John 3:4

3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Whoever commits a wrong act is at the same time transgressing God’s moral law. For sin is lawlessness. All sin is lawlessness. And all lawlessness is sin no matter who commits it—“whosoever.”

Christ came that the law might be fulfilled in us. See Romans 8:1-4.

The moral law, Ten Commandments, is a transcript of God’s moral character. To have the law written in our hearts (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16) is to be recreated in the image of God.

3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Christ was made manifest in our flesh and blood to take away sin, not to take away the law. He kept the law perfectly to take away sin in an expiatory sense by bearing our sins on the cross, and by making it possible for us not to sin again.

While Christ was tempted in all points as we are, never did He participate in our sins. In these words of John, he even takes us back to the ceaseless ages and teaches us that Christ has never sinned; not ever.

3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

He who continues to abide in Christ does not continue to habitually sin. A believer may fall into sin. After all, we are not free from temptation. But if a person has never ceased from sinning, and John is here referring to habitually sinning, then it shows that he does not truly know Jesus.

If someone had come to Christ but has fallen back into his old life of habitual sin, then it shows that he has not retained his fellowship with Christ.

3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

The Gnostics of John’s day were deceivers, teaching that we would continue in habitual sin. They made light of sin.

But the true follower of Christ will receive the righteousness of Christ, both imputed and imparted. They have His righteousness credited to them at the time of their conversion, and through the work of the Holy Spirit they have the righteousness of Christ imparted to them.

3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

He that commits sin is fulfilling the will of Satan. The devil has been sinning from the time of his rebellion, and has continued to sin. To set men free from the bondage of sin, Jesus, the divine Son of God, became one of us. He became flesh and dwelt among us. He came to destroy the works of the devil in us.

In the end, all that the devil has destroyed, God will restore. There will be a New Heaven and a New Earth.

3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

He who is born of God, born again, or born from above will not continue to sin as long as he remains in fellowship with Christ. John likens this power to a seed that springs forth a new life. The work of the Holy Spirit is for living a new life after the similitude of Christ.

As long as he maintains his connection to Christ he will not sin. But if he should let go, then he is powerless to resist the temptations of Satan. In other words, the power of Christ's life of love is more powerful than the devil's life of sin.

3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

A believer manifests to the world that he is truly a child of God by loving the brethren, but the children of the devil have hatred towards the brethren. Furthermore, the one who does not practice righteousness shows that he is not born of God.

3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

It would seem evident that in the early church, they were instructed to love one another. As I think of the many Bible studies available for our use, I cannot think of one that has love as one of its subjects. Yet the message that must be shared from the beginning of someone's walk with Christ is to love fellow believers. Perhaps we take this for granted, but in doing so we make a grave mistake.

3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Cain is used as an example of someone who was a child of the devil. He manifested this by slaying his brother Abel. John raises the question as to the motive of Cain's murderous act. It was because he was jealous that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and his was not. Cain should have repented that his offering was not according to God's expressed will. Instead, he chose to rid of his brother who was a constant rebuke to his life of sin.

3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Therefore, do not be surprised if the world hates you. From the time of the fall, the wicked have always sought to destroy the righteous.

3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

We can tell if we have passed from death unto life, if we have love for our fellow believers from all around the world. He that does not love his fellow believer shows that he is still in his original fallen nature. It reveals that he has not been born again.

3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

If we continue to hate our brother and wish him harm, then we will lose out on eternal life. The sins of hatred and murder are forgivable, but we must forsake such sins and be cleansed.

According to John, we can murder someone by hating them. You can be a murderer without taking someone's life. If our hate leads someone to become discouraged and they lose their way, we become a murder. By our hate we have become accomplices in his/her loss of eternal life.

3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

God is love. He demonstrated that as Jesus laid down His inestimable life for us. If His love abides in us, then we who are created beings should also be willing to lay down our life for one another. He made the supreme sacrifice. If we are born of God and abide in Him, then we will be willing to make the supreme sacrifice.

3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

John now turns to a lesser sacrifice, one that is common in the church. If you have the necessities of life, not luxuries, and you clearly see that your brother has need, do not turn your back on him. For how can the love of God dwell in us if we purposely neglect the needs of others?

3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

While it is good to love with kind words, we must not stop there. Furthermore, when we do give, let it come from a sincere and genuine love for one another, rather than from merely a sense of duty.

3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Our previous life of self-centeredness was a sure sign that we did not know God. But now, as we see God working in us to love in both word and deed, it continues to give us assurance that God is continually transforming us in His image. This gives us assurance to come before Him in reverence.

3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

You may think that God cannot use you to love others in word and deed because of your sinful past. Or perhaps you have fallen recently and feel ashamed. Do not focus on your failures; rather focus on His mercy, forgiveness, and love.

It will be your sense of God's love for you that will provide the motivation to reach out to others. God is greater than our mistakes and He is greater than our sins. So let us draw close to Him and to be used in His service.

3:21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

Our confidence in God will grow as we continue to abide in Him and experience victory over sin.

3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Would you like to see more answers to your prayers? Who wouldn't! The key is fellowship with God, whereby He empowers us to keep His commandments and to do those things that please Him. When we are familiar with the power of His resurrection to live a Christlike life, we will more likely pray aright.

However, if we chose to continue in disobedience we are less likely to pray for what we ought, we are less likely to discern any answers to our prayers, and our sins may in fact prevent our prayers from ascending heavenward.

When God does answer our prayers the answer may be "Wait." It might be "Not yet." It might be "I have something better for you."

3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

His commandment is for us to believe on the name or character of the Father's Son. We are to believe in Jesus Christ. We are to believe in His humanity and His divinity as the essential ingredients for our salvation. Our belief in Him enables us to love one another.

3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

If we keep His commandment we are in agreement with Him. And if it is your decision to do all that He asks, you may permanently make your abode with God. It is through the Spirit that we are able to keep His commandments, and it is through the Spirit that He abides in us.

Chapter Four of First John

4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

There were members in the church that had been listening to false teachings. So John says, “stop believing these false teaching.” In other words, do not believe every spirit or everything you hear. You must test what you hear with the Word. In fact, you must know whether what you hear is “of God,” or if it proceeds from or comes out of God. Therefore, if they speak not according to God’s Word, then they are not truly of God.

We do not need to guess what false teaching John predominantly had in mind. He had said, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” 1 John 4:3

The Jewish nation knew that Jesus was a man, but would they accept His divinity? Then there were some who had come into the church that questioned the humanity of Jesus. They believed in the gods, and some assumed that a god came into the life of Jesus at His baptism and then promptly left just before His crucifixion.

Antichrist on the other hand, taught that Jesus had a different human nature than us. In fact, antichrist teaches that Mary had a different nature than us. This is part of the false teachings of the Church of Rome.

4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

The foundational teaching of the Christian faith is that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” The Greek phrase, “is come in the flesh,” recognizes that this same Jesus that became man did indeed preexist. Jesus Christ, who came in human flesh was the Son of God from eternity. The verb “is come,” also recognizes that Jesus still retains this human form while He is ministering for us at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

This miracle of the incarnation of Christ teaches us that God can work out a miracle in each one of us. As Jesus lived a life in loving obedience to the Father in our fallen flesh, so can we through the work of the Holy Spirit.

4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Antichrist and every false teacher, who does not confess that Jesus is come in our fallen flesh is not of God. In other words, they are not speaking for God. And this confession cannot be some mere creed that is repeated without any corresponding change of heart and transformation of life. The evidence of our confession will be seen in a changed life after the similitude of Christ.

The gigantic system of antichrist was well on its way, therefore John could say that “even now already is it in the world.” The “spirit of antichrist” was alive and strong. These false teachers and false prophets were preparing the ground for the antichrist system to darken the world with her false teachings.

4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

The true believers of Christ, who are in fellowship with God, have experienced the power of Christ's divinity and humanity. They had tasted of the loving obedience of Christ's humanity, because this same Jesus lives in their hearts by faith. They have experienced the power of His resurrection. Therefore, there is no fear of even Satan himself, who is weak compared to the almighty power of God.

4:5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

These false teachers are truly of the world. The source of their inspiration is of the world. They think and act like the world, which is at enmity with God and His principles.

This doesn't mean that antichrist and these false teachers only talk about being worldly. However, they do not truly uplift Christ and His Word, therefore, the unconverted "world heareth them."

Recently Pope Francis came to the UN in September of 2015, and never mentioned Jesus once. Instead, he spoke about climate change, the redistribution of wealth, and other political, social, and economic subjects. If he was truly the representative of Jesus, then he would have spoken of Christ and Him crucified at the only hope for the world.

4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

There are two main spirits in the world. There is the "spirit of truth" and there is the "spirit of error." The "spirit of truth" has as its goal the conversion of precious souls. The "spirit of error" has as its goal the exaltation of self and the opinions of men.

Antichrist has this "spirit of error" where there is the deliberate attempt to draw men after the Catholic church and not after Christ. This is why the Bible refers to the antichrist power as the "man of sin" and the "son of perdition." 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Those who are "of God," delight to hear the truths taught by God's servants. But tragically, vast numbers of the human family are not attracted to the truth.

God will make sure that everyone has heard enough truth to make an intelligent decision for or against the truth. It is our work to simply present the truth as it is in Jesus. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring that truth to heart. The hearer will then make a decision for or against what he has heard.

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

There is no disconnect between the rejection of error and our love for one another. Both are essential in our Christian growth. We should love the truth and the brethren. However, some within the church have manifested a love for the truth but do not manifest a love for one another.

Can a person love to hear truth and yet hate his brother? The answer is tragically “Yes.” Some who have espoused the truth are guilty of sexual immorality, violence, crude jesting, slander, and gossip.

Those who know Him will have a love for both the truth and for fellow believers. Our love for one another is the evidence that we both know and love God.

4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

If someone has not begun to love the brethren, then it shows that he has never come to know God. If a person has never come to know God, then it is safe to say that he has never been born of God.

Love is not God, but God is love. One of the most fundamental qualities of God’s character is love. Other characteristics include holiness, mercy, and justice.

God is love means that God has always loved. There never was a time when He was not loving. It was the love of the Father that led Him to give His only begotten Son to die for the human race. It is His loving patience that allows Him to give man this lengthy probationary time to make a choice between love and hate, between light and darkness, between righteousness and sin, and between Christ and Satan.

4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

God manifested His love to us by sending His own Son to die for our sins. When the Father sent His Son, He did not take Him back. In other words, the Son will ever bear the human form while retaining His divinity. God truly gave to the human race His Son.

God sent His Son that we might “live through Him.” Christ came to do more than to pay the penalty for sin, which is death. He is risen that man might now live a new life in Him.

4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We love God because He loved us. His great love for us has made us loving. The greatest act of love is when God sent His Son to die for our sin. This great act of self-sacrificing love surpasses any attempt on our part to love. If we do love, it is because of Him and through Him.

4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

If God so loved us in giving His Son, then we ought to love one another. If we do not love one another it is because we have a shallow understand of His love for us.

4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

We want to see God. But we will have to wait until the Second Coming to see Him face-to-face. However, in this present world, He will dwell in us. And as we continue to love one another, His love is being perfected in us.

4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

When we are under the direction and leading of the Holy Spirit, we know that Christ dwells within. The only possible way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus is through the Spirit that has been given to us.

4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

John, as one of the twelve, testified that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. The apostles testified that the Father sent His own Son into the world to save the world. He came to save sinners no matter the age in which they lived or the country from where they were born. In the end, He will more than save sinners, He will restore the material world with a New Heaven and a New Earth.

4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

It is no mistake that John is inspired to use the name "Jesus," for it is predominantly in reference to His humanity. For the one who confesses that Jesus came in our fallen flesh and was at the same time the divine Son of God shows that "God dwells in him." It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings a sinner to this realization. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to make this confession more than mere words. The true believer realizes that the humanity of Jesus means everything to him. Because Jesus, the Son of God, became a man and sinned not, then the believer knows that through the Spirit he can live in loving obedience to God's commands as well.

4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

"And we have known," may refer to John and the disciples who followed Jesus from day one. They have known and believed the love that God has toward us. They learned that a life that continues to love is a life that is hid in Christ.

As they came to know Jesus they increasingly believed in Him. So it is with us. The more we know of Him, the more we will trust and love Him.

The devil knows this and so he tries to have us focus on something other than Jesus. Of course, he would want us to think about sinful things that we would lose interest in spiritual things. But if he cannot do that, then he will try to get us to even place good things above Jesus. For example, some make healthful living, dress reform, or some other Bible standard or Bible teaching the gospel. But the gospel will always be what God has done to save man from the penalty of sin and the power of sin.

4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Love is to be perfected in us. It is linked to our confidence in the day of judgment. That confidence is based upon our likeness to Christ. As we become more and more like our Savior, we are also becoming more and more like our Judge. As we are being transformed in His altogether beautiful image, we know that the Holy Spirit is working mightily in our life. This gives us confidence in the day of judgment, which in turn perfects love in the human soul.

This perfecting of love is to be a reality in this present world. We are not to wait until the soon return of Jesus to be loving or to be obedient. For when He comes every case will already have been decided.

4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Today, men's hearts are failing them for fear. They are fearful of the future. They are fearful of a judgment. Why would someone be fearful of these things? Because they do not know God. Without knowing God, love cannot be perfected.

But as we grow in love, fear will diminish. When love is perfected, there is no more fear. There is no fear of God because we have learned experiential that He is love. There is no fear of man because we know that our loving heavenly Father will take care of His children. As Paul had taught us, all things work together for good for them who love the Lord.

But fear that brings torment is based upon a life that has not chosen to know God nor to serve Him.

4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

If God had not loved us, we would not have loved God. In fact, we would have been incapable of loving either God or one another.

4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

It is easy to say that I love God. But if I hate my brother whom I can see, how can I love God whom I do not see? In fact, it could be said that I do not love God any more than the person I love least in the church.

4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

The command to love is of God. Since God is love, it would only follow that He would command us to love. Love for God and man must go together, for you cannot have one with the other.

Chapter Five of First John

5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

In the first four chapters the emphasis was on love. In this final chapter John brings forth the vital importance to believe.

If we truly believe in Jesus and are born of God, then we will love everyone who is also begotten of Him. We love Him who saved us and we love those He has saved.

5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

The evidence that we will truly love all of God's children will be seen in our loving obedience to all of God's commandments. This would infer that if we do not keep His commandments there will be people in our life that we will not love.

5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Those who love God will keep the commandments of God. This will not seem grievous to them. It is their joy to do all things that are pleasing to Him.

God's commandments are not grievous because we are able to keep them by divine grace. If it was not possible to keep them, then they would seem to be grievous. Now some teach that we cannot keep them. This is partially true. We are not able to keep in our own strength, but we are able to keep them by the power of His resurrection.

With the Holy Spirit working in our life, we will both desire to keep them and will keep them by divine power.

5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Since Christ overcame the devil in our fallen flesh, we too may overcome. We are able to overcome all those things that are opposed to God's kingdom of love and grace. Our victory over sin is based upon our faith in Him who has already conquered. Because He conquered we may conquer gloriously. As He lived, so may we, because He lives in us.

5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

The foundational truth of the Christian faith is that Jesus is the Son of God. The Son of God indeed became the Son of man. He took upon Himself our fallen flesh and conquered sin in our flesh by not sinning. Our hope of overcoming is directly related to His victorious life in our flesh.

5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

In the phrase, "by water and blood," John is referring to Jesus' baptism and His crucifixion. It was not enough that Christ was baptized and had a ministry in our flesh. It was necessary that He die for our sins

if we would have the hope of eternal salvation. This truth is testified by the Holy Spirit and we know that the Spirit does not lie but only speaks the truth.

5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

The Father, the Word (the Son), and the Holy Spirit are not one person, but they are in full agreement. The Godhead explained to the angels “in heaven,” that the Son would sacrifice His life for the sins of human race.

5:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit made that same announcement to the human family. The Father had declared that Jesus was His Son from eternity. Jesus had declared that He was the Son of God. The Holy Spirit inspired John the Baptist to declare that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Millions have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to make that same declaration. This is likely the reason why we find the Holy Spirit mentioned first in this verse. It is He that leads the sinner to receive Jesus as their Savior.

5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

If God has spoken concerning His Son, should we not esteem the words of God above the words of men? And if God has spoken as to the divinity of His Son Jesus, then the issue is settled. Jesus is the Son of God from eternity who became the Son of man in our fallen flesh, yet without sin.

5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

Those who experientially believe that Jesus is the Son of God have tasted of the Lord and know for sure that He is the Christ, the Savior of the world. But for those who do not accept the true nature of Christ’s humanity and divinity, demonstrate that they do not know the Father. They make God out to be a liar by refusing to believe in what the Father testified concerning His Son.

5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

God is the Life-giver, and the gift of eternal life is in His Son. There is but one Savior of the world. There is but one Mediator of the Christian faith. It is the Son of God.

It is also true that you have eternal life in you if the Son dwells in you. His life is unborrowed and underived. It is an eternal life. And if that life of Christ, which is eternal, is in you, then you have eternal life.

5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

If Jesus abides in you then you already have a taste of the world to come. But if you do not know the Son, then you have not experience what life is truly all about. When God created Adam and Eve they had

a perfect nature. They had life. When they sinned they now faced death. But thanks be to God, through the gift of His Son, we might have life—life eternal.

So we might ask, “What does this eternal life look like in our fallen flesh?”

When Jesus chose to leave the glories of heaven and became poor that we might become rich—That’s life!

When Jesus healed the man with a withered hand—That’s life!

When He went through a town and healed all who were sick—That’s life!

When Jesus had compassion for the multitude and fed them—That’s life!

When He spent time witnessing to individuals like Nicodemus—That’s life!

When He cleansed His Father’s House from unholy merchandising traffic—That’s life!

When He passed by no one as worthless, but inspired them to become a son or daughter of God—That’s life!

When He reached out to the downcast of society—That’s life!

When He broke down social prejudice and healed the centurion’s servant—That’s life.

When He desired the salvation of a Samaritan woman—That’s life.

When He took the simple things in life and spoke as no one had ever spoke—That’s life!

After they dragged Jesus through seven unjust trials and then nailed Him to a cross, He said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”—That’s life!

In God is life, and without God there is no life—for He is the life.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:11, 12.

Life is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Truth. See Galatians 5:22.

But hate, anger, impatience, violence, harshness, evil, pride, and lies are death.

5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

John reaffirms the purpose of His first epistle. He is writing to those who know the truth, but there are false teachers lurking about to deceive and to destroy. He is encouraging his fellow saints to remember

that eternal life is centered in the Son of God. They must not get misled as to the humanity and divinity of Christ.

John is writing because he is fearful that some might be misled. "These things I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God...that ye may believe..." In other words, he is writing that their faith might be strengthened; that it might come to full strength. Do you have members that are low in spiritual fuel? Do they need more spiritual strength?

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

God's will for us is our sanctification. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

The apostle Paul wrote that Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25-27

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:" Galatians 1:4

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Ephesians 1:5

Therefore, anything we would prayer concerning our justification or sanctification we may have confidence that He hears us. If our confidence is "in Him," then we will love to communion with Him in prayer.

5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

John is not suggesting that we have a blank check when it comes to prayer. Whatsoever we ask according to His will we know that we shall receive because God will always keep His word. John is encouraging each one of us to draw closer to Christ that we may know His will. And it brings joy to the Lord that we make our petitions to Him.

Consider this beautiful statement concerning prayer:

"Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand. Christ says, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' Mark 11:24. He makes it plain that our asking must be according to God's will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will. The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.

“For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received.

“We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most.

“To live thus by the word of God means the surrender to Him of the whole life. There will be felt a continual sense of need and dependence, a drawing out of the heart after God. Prayer is a necessity; for it is the life of the soul. Family prayer, public prayer, have their place; but it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life.

“It was in the mount with God that Moses beheld the pattern of that wonderful building which was to be the abiding place of His glory. It is in the mount with God--in the secret place of communion--that we are to contemplate His glorious ideal for humanity. Thus we shall be enabled so to fashion our character building that to us may be fulfilled His promise, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16. Ellen G. White, *Education*, pages 257, 258

5:16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Now John turns from personal prayer concerning our own spiritual condition to that of a brother. If we saw that a brother was struggling with a sin, we would want to pray for him. But since he has a will, our prayers will not be able to force some conversion upon him. But John assures us that it is helpful to pray for a brother who is sinning a sin that is not unto death.

However, there is a sin unto death. This would be the unpardonable sin whereby a person chooses not to repent.

In another sense, a sin unto death can refer to our negative influence on people, whereby our words and actions encourages others to sin. Our life of sin could influence others not to repent. Therefore, our own sins that cause others to remain in sin, can lead others down the path to eternal death.

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Sin is sin no matter who commits it. All sin is to be repented of, and we would do well to pray that the erring would repent. There are so many different kinds of sin committed in our world. Some are more heinous than others, but they are nonetheless acts of unrighteousness. The difference may not be so much the particular act of the sin as to the motive and defiance behind the sin.

5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

We know that whosoever is born again receives a new life. This is not an improvement of the old life, but a transformation of life. It is a life without sin. It is a life of righteousness. It is the life of Christ.

Such a life is begotten of God and kept by God. If we chose to remain in Him the devil cannot touch us. We can be tempted. However, if we remain in His loving arms and choose to obey, God will keep us and protect us from the evil one.

We need the protective care of God more than we know. Our safeguard would be to know Him who is greater than him who is in the world.

This verse would also speak against any excuses we may give for sinning. Today, we hear that some are born homosexuals, therefore, they teach that it is okay for them to practice this lifestyle. However, it matters not what sinful hereditary traits we are born with. We are to be born again. In this new birth experience, we will not give in to those sinful hereditary traits. Rather, we will live a new life in Christ.

5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

It is unpopular to say that we are of God and others are not. But if the world does not know Him experientially, then they will continue in wickedness. Therefore, the sure sign that one is of God and not of the world, is that he is no longer living in wickedness.

This verse is also a call to be separate from the evil practices of the world. We are to reach out to those who know not Christ, but we are not to participate any longer in the sins of the world. We are to be His peculiar people, that call men and women to come out of spiritual Babylon.

5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

We know that the Son of God has already been incarnate, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and has ascended into heaven. These truths every man, no matter his educational or economic background, can understand. But what draws men to Christ is that they may know Him. We know the facts surrounding His life and death. But we may know His purity of life, His patience, and His loving kindness. In other words, we can know more than all the milestones in the plan of salvation. We can know Him that is true. We may know Him as He truly is.

5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Any and all idols that lessen our love for God and the duty we owe to Him need to be forsaken. Antichrist, the chief proponent of Satan's war against the true God is a false system that worships idols. All of these idols of Mary and the saints, rob God of the honor due to Him and Him alone. Little children, stay away from these false teachers, for Jesus is the true Mediator between God and man, and there is none other. Amen.

The Second Epistle of John

1:1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

John is the elder who is writing to the elect lady, which may be a dear sister in the Lord, or it may be in reference to a church group, or both.

If it is a specific sister in the Lord, the “children” may be hers, they may be members of the church group, or a combination of both. In either case, the letter is truly addressed to more than one saint.

The words “whom I love...and not only I” remind us that it is important to tell fellow believers that we love them, and to let them know that others are praying for them. It gives us some insight into the early church, whereby the faithful believers exhibited a spiritual intimacy amongst one another.

This may be a persecuted church group that needs some kind of affirmation. It also may be necessary to remind the group that they need to continue to love one another.

“Whom I love in the truth.” Truth has a way of tying brothers and sisters together all around the world. There seems to be a special affection for those who have embraced the truth as it is in Jesus.

“But also all they that have known the truth.” Praise God that we have people in the truth that have remained in the truth for years. The truth that we hold dear are the truths taught by our Savior, which we carried forth by the disciples, and kept alive for us through the reformers.

1:2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

We should express this love for one another “for the truth’s sake.” If we do, we will dwell in the truth forever. We are held in the bonds of love not by a mere creed, but because the truth dwells in us. What truly unifies us is the Word written in our hearts by faith.

1:3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Here we find that both grace, mercy, and peace come from the Father and the Son. Grace is the power of God that enables the sinner to live a new life. Mercy is that divine attribute that makes salvation possible for the sinner. And peace is the blessed result of coming to Christ and being born again.

Truth and love are the two key words in this short epistle, and it is important that we possess both in our walk with Christ.

We find the combination of grace, mercy, and peace often in the beginning of Paul’s epistles. See 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2

1:4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

It is good that we share our joy for the faithfulness of others. We are first and foremost thankful to God who saves them and empowers them.

It is a joy to know that someone’s children are “walking in truth.” They not only know the truth, but they are living the truth in their everyday lives.

They are particularly fulfilling the commandment from the Father to love one another.

1:5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

It would seem that they had read John's first epistle for he says, "not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee." It is a commandment that the early believers were well-educated on, namely, to love one another.

1:6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

In verse five we had reference to the "commandment," namely, the commandment to love. Here we find the plural "commandments." By keeping all of God's ten commandments, we are fulfilling THE commandment to love one another. Love and law go together. Often they are falsely presented by some as if they are contrary to one another. However, the most loving and beautiful life that we can live is one that is in full agreement with God's precepts.

1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

In connection with the great commandment to love in verse six, John warns this church group of the many deceivers that threaten the church. These deceivers reject the very fundamental truth of Christ's humanity. As such, they really do not understand the gospel. In addition, it is through the sinless and self-sacrificing life of Jesus in our flesh that makes it possible for us to love.

1:8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

"Look to yourselves," meaning that they will need to personally handle any situation that might arise from these deceivers. They must take a stand because we do not want to lose even one precious soul that the Lord has entrusted to us.

Members must be encouraged to be faithful unto the end that they might receive that "full reward," which is immortality, eternal life.

1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

We are to remain in the doctrines taught by Christ. We are not to add to or delete from the Word of God. But antichrist has placed his traditions above the Word. This would show that he neither has the Father nor the Son. But he that walks in the light of God's counsel has both the Father and the Son.

1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

While we are at all times to be hospitable to strangers and to those who are searching for truth, we are not to give add to those who purposely teach error. We are not to wish them success in their deceptive endeavors.

In a similar way, we are not to invited people to preach from our pulpits when we know that they will teach error.

1:11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

By voluntarily associating with those who teach error, some will think that we support their false teachings.

1:12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

John would like to say more to them, but he has pointed out the most important issues at hand. It is his hope that they may meet in person that they might study the Word more deeply.

1:13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

It may be that John was currently visiting a sister church in the region and he sends their greetings.

The Third Epistle of John

1:1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Gaius is a faithful believer who exhibited Christian love and hospitality to the traveling teachers. Then there is the unsanctified leadership of Diotrephes (verse 9), who exhibited the spirit of control and contention.

Gaius was likely to receive this letter and to share it with the members of the church, because Diotrephes could not be trusted to do so.

1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Here John is referring to the mental, physical, and spiritual. He is not so much praying that Gaius will become wealthy, as much as he prays that Gaius might experience a successful journey in life. Certainly we would want to pray for the health of a fellow member, and it might be that Gaius is experiencing some health issues. Then John prays that Gaius' soul may prosper.

One way of taking care of our spiritual condition is to be mindful of a healthy mind and body. As we see God directing our steps to be prosperous in our journey in life, as we reap the benefits of healthful living, we will aid in the development of a well-rounded character.

1:3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

John rejoiced as he heard several reports about Gaius. These positive reports carried the good news that Gaius not only knew the truth but that he was walking in the truth.

1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Gaius may have been a convert of John, hence the reference to "my children." And there is no greater joy that to know that someone has stood their ground for the truth without wavering. To find men who will stand for truth though the heavens fall is rare.

1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

The kind deeds that Gaius performed unto the brethren and unto strangers were acts of faith. They testified that Gaius was in fellowship with Christ. His deeds were sincere and Spirit-filled.

1:6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

The brethren that have received your loving assistance have borne witness to the fact. Continue to be a blessing to the traveling brethren and teachers, for this helps to bind us together in the love of Christ.

1:7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

These traveling teachers went forth by faith and took nothing from the Gentiles or non-believers for expenses. Of course, this makes the support from fellow believers all the sweeter.

It would not have been wrong for a teacher to receive from a non-believer if it were freely offered. But it is best if there is no accusation that they were teaching for personal gain.

1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

It is important that we help these faithful teachers of God's Word. In so doing, we are fellow helpers in proclaiming the truth.

1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

Diotrephes loved the power of his position more than he loved the truth. It seems from the verse that Diotrephes refused to read a letter written by John, (perhaps the Second Epistle of John), which manifested a disregard for the apostolic authority of John. Diotrephes "loveth to have the preeminence among them," and perhaps held to views contrary to the apostles' doctrine.

The behavior of Diotrephes is quite the opposite of that of Gaius.

1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

Diotrephes opposed John and those loyal to the truth by words and actions. While Gaius would show hospitality to the traveling teachers, Diotrephes would not. In fact, would threaten with excommunication those who would assist these traveling teachers sent from John.

1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Diotrephes is doing that which is evil. The description of Gaius in verses 5-8 is good. When we do good, these works are of God. When evil is done, it shows that we have not seen nor known God.

Similar language is found in 1 John 3:6-10:

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

1:12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

This verse seems to suggest that some might not have known Demetrius or perhaps had questions about him. But John assures Gaius that Demetrius is a faithful Christian as attested by many men. John personally bears record that Demetrius both knows and lives the truth.

1:13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

John had others things he would have liked to discuss in the letter. But it seems better to visit them in person and to speak about these serious issues concerning Diotrephes.

1:14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

John intended to be there shortly. The situation probably required his presence.

The close of the letter shows that John likely knew the associates of Gaius who helped to strengthen the church.

“Peace be to thee.” May there be peace between you and God. May there be close fellowship between you and God. And may this heavenly peace bring peace among all who believe. Amen.