
a *Grace Notes* publication

1 John

an expositional Bible study by
Dr. Grant C. Richison

1 John

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Foreword

These lessons in **1 John** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, and were first published on the Internet beginning in 2001 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Introduction

I. AUTHOR - John, one of the twelve.

A. The author does not call himself by name, but speaks in the first person

· "We write," 1:4

· "I write," 2:1

B. The earliest Christian writers after the apostolic period quote this epistle as from the Apostle John.

The virtual unanimous opinion of the early church is that the gospel and epistle were the legacies of John in his old age.

C. Internal evidence is overwhelming that John wrote the epistle:

1. Eyewitness of the Lord, 1:1-3.
2. Many words and phrases nowhere else in the New Testament except in the Gospel of John.

3. Comparisons to gospel of John:

· John 1:1 – 1 John 1:1

· John 16:24 – 1 John 1:4

· John 14:15 – 1 John 2:3

· John 17:2 – 1 John 2:25

D. External Evidence: From the earliest times the epistle was not only treated as scripture, but as written by John

1. Cited or alluded to by Polycarp (A.D. 110-50)
2. Cited or alluded to by Hermas (A.D. 115-40)
3. Named as authentic by Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202)
4. Named as authentic by Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215)
5. Cited or alluded to by Tertullian (A.D. 150-220)
6. Named as authentic by Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-86)
7. Named as authentic by Eusebius (A.D. 325-40)
8. Named as authentic by Jerome (A.D. 340-420)

9. Named as authentic by Augustine (A.D. 400)

10. Named as authentic by all of the canons (Muratorian (A.D. 170), Barococcio (A.D. 206), Apostolic (A.D. 300), Cheltenham (A.D. 360), Athanasuis (A.D. 367) except the Marcion (A.D. 140)

11. Named as authentic in the Old Latin (A.D. 200) and Old SyriActs (A.D. 400) translations.

12. Named as authentic in all of the councils (Nicea A.D. (325-40), Hippo (392), Carthage (397) and Carthage (419)).

E. Internal Evidence:

1. The writer declares himself to be an eyewitness to Christ (1:1-5)
2. The epistle has an authoritative tone (4:6)
3. The style of writing is close to the Gospel of John

II. DATE - about A.D. 95 [from Ephesus]

III. KEY VERSES

A. Key verse of John's Gospel: 20:30,31 -- stresses the FACT of the gospel.

B. Key verse o-f John's Epistle: 5:13 -- stresses the ASSURANCE of eternal life.

IV. KEY WORD - "Fellowship"

V. THEME - Fellowship With God Through Christ.

VI. BACKGROUND

A. Gnostic Problem

1. Preoccupation with deliverance from the flesh – dualistic view of man [matter was evil and spirit was good].

· Matter is inherently evil.

2. This view led to speculations about the origin of the material universe. "How could God create it, if it is evil?"

3. The Gnostics posited a series of "aeons" or emanations from God, each more removed from Him that its predecessors, until one emerged sufficiently remote to create the material world.

B. Problem of 1 John

1. The problem of 1 John concerns not creation but incarnation.
2. Fundamental to Gnostic thought was that the body was a base prison in which the rational or spiritual part of man was incarcerated, and from which it needed to be released by GNOSIS (knowledge).
3. One of the movements that may lie behind this epistle was that of Cerinthus (a Gnostic).
 - Cerinthus taught Jesus was not born of a virgin, i.e., the son of Joseph and Mary.
 - Christ descended upon Jesus after his baptism.
 - Ultimately Christ departed from Jesus.
 - This is the severance of the man Jesus from the divine Christ or spirit.
4. Docetism was also a problem (Christ did not have true human flesh but He was a phantom playing the role of a human).
 - Jesus only APPEARED to take human form. The incarnation was, therefore, not a reality. This was an attempt to preserve the deity of Christ at the expense of His humanity.
 - This false doctrine has great impact on the death of Christ as a substitute for our sins.
 - 1 John 1:1; 4:2, 3

C. Setting

1. John ministered to churches in Asia Minor (western Turkey).
2. Church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius indicate that John launched an extensive evangelistic ministry throughout Asia Minor while living in Ephesus.
3. The design of 1 John was to combat false doctrine (1 John 2:18-26; 3:7; 4:1-3; 5:1-6).
4. The false doctrine may have been that of Cerinthus who believed that the Messiah descended on Jesus at his baptism and left Him before His death.

VII. DESTINATION -- churches of the provinces of Asia.

- A. Not addressed to any particular local church, so scholars call it a "general epistle."

- B. 1 John was probably sent first to the churches scattered throughout Asia Minor where John ministered (Re 1:4; chapters 2-3).

VIII. PURPOSE -- to give assurance of eternal life to those who believe in Christ (5:13).

- A. John also wrote to motive his readers to cultivate greater fellowship with God ["abide," "love"].
- B. John wrote to help us understand the standards for fellowship with God (1:7,9) ["light"].
 - Light helps us to see our sin and what it does to our fellowship with God.

IX. KEY WORDS

- LIGHT - 6 times
- LOVE - 33 times
- LIFE - 15 times
- FELLOWSHIP - 4 times
- KNOW - 38 times
- WORLD - 23 times

X. CHARACTERISTICS

- A. Simple language but deep truths.
- B. Sharp contrasts: 2:4-5; 5:19; 1:5; 3:14; 2:15,22; 4:20
- C. 1 John puts emphasis on incarnation—humanity of Christ. The Gospel of John emphasizes His deity.
- D. No Old Testament quotations.
- E. Familiar truths repeated and reemphasized.
- F. In the writings of Paul, the doctrine of justification is prominent; in those of John, the doctrine of regeneration is prominent.
- G. 1 John is a polemical discourse against heretics, particularly the Gnostics.
- H. There is a pastoral element to the book.
- I. The structure of 1 John is difficult to outline because transitional verses and paragraphs may be placed with preceding or following verses.

XI. MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

- A. Terms of endearment:
 - "beloved" (3:2,21; 4:1,7,11)
 - "brethren" (2:7; 3:13)

· "little children (2:1,12,13,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21)

B. Expressions of certainty

· This is the message (1:5; 3:11)

· This is the promise (2:25)

· This is the record (5:11)

· This is the confidence (5:14)

C. 5 Johns in the New Testament

· John the Baptist (Luke 7:20)

· John the Apostle (Matt. 10:2)

· John Mark (Acts 15:37)

· John (Acts 4:6)

· Father of Peter (John 1:42)

D. No formal introduction or conclusion to the epistle.

E. Contains 5 chapters, 105 verses and 2,523 words in the King James.

XII. THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS JOHN.

· 1 John takes the child of God across the threshold into the fellowship of the Father's home.

· It is the "Family" epistle -- The Family of God.

· "Father" is used 13 times and "little Children" is used 11 times.

OUTLINE

I. THE REALITY OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, 1:1-4

A. CHRIST MANIFEST -- the provision for fellowship, 1:1-2

B. ABIDING - the purpose of fellowship, 1:3

C. JOY - the result of fellowship, 1:4

II. HOW TO FELLOWSHIP WITH A GOD OF LIGHT, 1:5-2:28.

A. FELLOWSHIP WITH THE GOD OF LIGHT, 1:5-10

B. THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP, 2:1-2.

C. THE VICTORIOUS CHARACTER OF FELLOWSHIP, 2:3-11

D. THE PERIL TO FELLOWSHIP, 2:12-17.

E. THE ENEMIES TO FELLOWSHIP -- SECESSIONISTS, 2:18-29

III. HOW TO FELLOWSHIP WITH A GOD OF LOVE, 3:1-4:21.

A. PICTURES OF FELLOWSHIP, 3:1-18.

1. The love of God for us, 3:1-2

2. Our relation to that love, 3:3-7

3. What fellowship based on love does for believers, 3:8-18

B. THE PRACTICE OF FELLOWSHIP, 3:19-4:21.

1. Proof of love, 3:19-24

2. Tests for fellowship, 4:1-16

3. Brotherly love founded on God's love, 4:17-21

IV. HOW TO FELLOWSHIP WITH A GOD OF LIFE, 5:1-21.

A. ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, 5:1-12.

B. PRIVILEGES OF FELLOWSHIP, 5:13-21.

1 John 1

1 John 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, concerning the Word of life..."

Two men (Paul and John) wrote nineteen books of the 27 in the New Testament. John wrote five books: the gospel of John, the 3 epistles of John and the book of Revelation.

The prolog of 1 John runs from verse 1 through verse 4. John launches immediately into a defense of the authenticity of the humanity of Christ, which is the subject of the entire book of 1 John.

John writes this epistle to counteract the Gnostic heresy. An agnostic knows nothing; a Gnostic knows everything (supposedly). They taught that Jesus was a phantom or spirit, not a genuine human being.

1 John focuses on the person of Christ. Joy revolves around Him, "How tedious and tasteless the hours when Jesus no longer I see." The thrill and joy of the Christian life disappears when we lose sight of Jesus.

As John is writing this epistle, he is thinking about Cerinthus. Cerinthus came into town with a full load of hot air about incipient Gnosticism. This form of Gnosticism denied the humanity of Christ. John here is attacking that doctrine.

That which was from the beginning,

John does not refer here to the absolute beginning of creation (Ge 1:1) but to the beginning of the message of Jesus Christ to the apostles. This verse gives the testimony of those who walked with the Lord when He was on earth. They accompanied Him for 3 and ½ years. They ate with Him and traveled with Him. Jesus personally taught them.

The word "which" is neuter referring to the manifestation of Christ (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12). This collectively gathers into one all the varied and wonderful truths regarding the person of Christ. It is all that He is, represents or ever will be. It is what He is in Himself plus what He is for us and for the entire universe.

The word "was" indicates what Jesus was essentially. This combats the Gnostic heresy that portrayed Jesus as impersonal, a mere emanation.

John's congregation went berserk over a false system of spirituality. They thought that they could have fellowship with God apart from a true understanding of the humanity of Christ.

The "beginning" here is the message to the apostles in which God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. He is the beginning of the revelation of God. He reveals God comprehensively. Eternal fellowship precedes temporal fellowship.

Principle: God must reveal Himself before we can fellowship with Him.

Application: There has always been a lot of speculation about God; however, we cannot have fellowship with God unless we first know Him. We cannot know God apart from Christ. He is the principle by which God reveals Himself.

What is the principle of fellowship with God? There is only one member of the Trinity revealed to mankind (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Ti. 6:16; 1 John 4:12) and that member is Jesus Christ.

If we fellowship with God, we must come to know Him first. How do we get to know Him? At the point at which He reveals Himself – in the person of Christ. Jesus is the point of God's revelation.

Christianity is Christ. We cannot know Jesus Christ apart from the cross. We cannot have eternal fellowship with Christ apart from the cross. Eternal fellowship always precedes fellowship in time.

Before we can have fellowship with God, we must meet Him personally. Before we can know someone we must first meet them, be introduced to them, and shake their hand. We just can't walk up to God and shake his hand.

God's greatest expression of grace is Jesus Christ. God always reveals Himself on the principle of grace. He never reveals Himself on the principle of human ability. God always bases spirituality on God's ability, not on our ability.

which we have heard

John now verifies the apostles' experience. The "we" in this phrase represents the apostles. The apostles visually encountered the person of Christ. Cerinthus, the apostate, never saw Jesus yet he talks as if he knows all about Christ. He said Jesus was a phantom.

The issue here is authenticity and credibility of message. If Jesus did not have genuine blood but was an optical illusion, then there is no reality to our salvation. John says to Cerinthus, "Did you walk in the presence of Jesus Christ, Cerinthus? Did you see Him with your own eyes? I did." Cerinthus bought into the current philosophy of the day. He allowed philosophy to give meaning to the Bible rather than the Bible give meaning to philosophy.

The word "heard" indicates that the apostles personally heard Jesus from the beginning and they continue to his day to remember what they heard. Note that the "we" refers to the apostles, not to just John alone. John was in the inner circle of Peter, James and John. None heard more of Jesus than the apostle John. John writes many things in the gospel of John that are peculiar to his gospel alone. He was the closest of all apostles to the Lord Jesus.

Matt. 13:16-17

which we have seen with our eyes,

The apostles saw Jesus with permanent results [perfect tense]. Everything that follows in the first

four verses is apostolic testimony to the whole earthly ministry of Jesus.

which we have looked upon,

The words "looked upon" indicate that the apostles' ability to grasp the significance of who and what Jesus is by personal face-to-face observation. There was no deception or error in the apostles' experience. John uses this word in John 1:14.

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

and our hands have handled,

The handling of Jesus refers in part to the resurrection of Christ (John 20:24-29; Luke 24:39). Jesus had a real body; he was no phantom. He was a carpenter with muscles. He was a man's man.

Luke 24:39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet."

concerning the Word of life

Not only does John concern us with the person and humanity of Christ but also he involves us with the message of Christ. John's concern is about the message of life, God's Son, who is Life Himself (5:20).

The apostle John referred to Jesus as the "Word" in his gospel. With adding the word "life" to the "Word," John says that the Word is the one who personifies life (1:2; Acts 5:20; Ph 2:16). The "Word" is Christ manifested as God's message.

The words "Word" and "life" are key words in the gospel of John (John 1:4). "Life" is eternal life. The gospel speaks of the incarnation of the eternal Word; the epistle speaks of the manifestation of eternal life.

"Of life" means life-giving. Jesus is both the messenger and the message. The message and the messenger are identical.

Principle: Jesus is at once the One who manifests God and is the message of God.

Application: Jesus had true humanity. The apostles heard Him, saw Him, touched Him. Their

sense of sight, hearing and touch made that clear. Jesus was not half man and half God. He was 100% man and 100% God. He is at once both human and divine.

The Bible is both human and divine. Men wrote it under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit. We can find the risen Lord on almost every page of the Bible, so our attitude toward Jesus should be reflected in our attitude toward the Word of God. We recognize eternal life in people who know Jesus.

Jesus is the Word. He tells out God; He reveals God. He shows forth God as no one else can. He is the genuine expression and thoughts of God.

We can have physical life without spiritual life. Some people are dead spiritually (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14). However, Jesus is the source of spiritual life. Those who believe in Him go through a spiritual experience comparable to physical birth (John 3:16, 36). The Bible calls this "eternal life." Believing in Jesus Christ means more than believing in concepts about Him.

1 John 1:2

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

the life was manifested,

John continues to emphasize the authenticity of the apostles' seeing the humanity of Christ in person to counteract the false doctrine that Christ was a phantom (Gnosticism). He picks up the theme of "life." The "life" here is the "Word of life" of verse 1. The Word of life manifested Himself to the apostles to qualify them as eyewitnesses of His message. Jesus came into view of the apostles as physically real.

1 Tim. 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

For 33 and ½ years God came to earth incognito. The second person of the Trinity became a baby at the incarnation. Few accepted Him. They ultimately murdered Him on a cross yet He was the manifestation of grace itself.

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men..."

and we have seen,

John lends his credibility as a witness to the physical reality of Christ. He was an eyewitness to Him historically. John carried the authority of experience.

and bear witness,

The apostles "bear witness" to seeing and knowing the Word of life manifested on earth. This was the testimony of the highest-ranking people in Christianity - the authors of the New Testament.

2 Peter 1:16 "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

and declare to you that eternal life

Not only is Jesus the "Word of life" (1:1) but He offers eternal life to us. Jesus had eternal life in Himself. This phrase emphasizes the eternity of Christ. Jesus existed in a pre-incarnate state before He was born in Bethlehem. Jesus came with a quality of life like no other.

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

The apostles "declare" "that eternal life." The Eternal Word gave them authoritative commission and credentials to proclaim the true gospel with entitlement. Their message was not speculation or philosophy but revelation.

Principle: We find eternal life in the incarnate and crucified Son of God.

Application: The moment you receive eternal life that Jesus gives, you transition from eternal death to eternal life. Eternal life does not begin when you die but when you trust Christ as your Savior. We locate eternal life in the eternal Son.

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

John 20:31 "...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

1 John 5:11 "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

which was with the Father

Jesus in His eternity lived with the Father in eternity past. This is the preincarnate existence of the eternal Son. The Lord did not begin at Bethlehem or at the incarnation. He always existed eternally with the Father.

John 17:5 "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

and was manifested to us

Jesus "manifested" to the apostles is the incarnation. Jesus "was manifested" because He already existed. Jesus did not appear to the patriarchs and prophets as He appeared to the apostles. He appeared in the Old Testament in theophanes (physical manifestations of God) but He appeared to the apostles in person.

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Col. 3:4 "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

Principle: We do not attain eternal life by our merit but we obtain it by the merit of Christ.

Application: We cannot attain eternal life; we must obtain it. We cannot work for eternal life but we can obtain it as a gift. The Lord Jesus is that gift. There is no other way to go to the Father.

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Eph. 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is

the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

1 John 1:3

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

Entering the eternal life of the Son will produce two results: 1) fellowship with fellow believers, and 2) fellowship with the Father and the Son.

that which we have seen and heard we declare to you,

The recipients of 1 John were genuine believers (2:12-14,21,27; 5:13). They never met Jesus in the flesh, as did the apostles. They never knew that kind of fellowship with the Lord. The only way they could fellowship with Jesus was by the writing of the New Testament, by revelation given to the apostles.

that you also may have fellowship with us;

John now introduces the purpose of the epistle of 1 John - fellowship with 1) believers and 2) with God.

“Fellowship” here is fellow participants of eternal life. Fellowship requires revelation. The readers of 1 John can fellowship with the apostles by their writings - the New Testament. Fellowship among Christians has a divine foundation.

The word “with” emphasizes deep reciprocal fellowship in the things of God among believers.

Principle: Horizontal fellowship depends on vertical fellowship.

Application: We must guard against fracturing our relationship with fellow Christians. Jealousy, suspicion, judging, disloyalty and selfishness break down fellowship among Christians.

Both horizontal fellowship and vertical fellowship are important in the Christian life. Horizontal fellowship is fellowship among Christians. Believers fellowship around God’s revelation - the Word of God. This is fellowship of Christian with Christian.

He 10:35 “...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some,

but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

People who fellowship the most with fellow Christians fellowship the most with God. Fellowship with God compels us to fellowship with others of like faith. We do not fellowship with darkness.

Eph. 5:11 “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

Genuine fellowship involves communion; communion involves communication, contribution and distribution. The early church held to four vital, indispensable ingredients of fellowship.

Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

First, the early church fellowshiped in the “Apostles’ doctrine.” This is revelation, the Word of God. That is the foundation of fellowship.

The second ingredient of fellowship among Christians is “fellowship” itself. Christians are in the Christian life together. They share something that those who do not know Christ cannot share. It is crucial to cultivate Christian fellowship. We have to work at it. Some people could care less whether they go to church or not. This violates the principle of Christian fellowship. The reason many of us do not have genuine Christian friends is that we do not work at it.

Prov. 18:24 “A man who has friends must himself be friendly,

But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

The third element of fellowship in the early church was the “breaking of bread” - sitting at the communion table together. People who care about fellowship love to fellowship at the Lord’s Supper together.

The fourth and final basis of fellowship was “prayers”. They prayed together. “Where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them.” There is something about praying together that bonds believers together like nothing else.

Faith in common with fellow believers goes far beyond social intercourse, companionship or comradeship. It is a partnership in the truth of the gospel and in the life of the Son. When we share what we know with each other, we fellowship with one another.

Genuine fellowship has a substructure, a spiritual platform. That substructure is not our personalities or capacity for friendship but something more substantial than that. Our horizontal fellowship is possible because of our vertical fellowship with God.

and truly our fellowship is with the Father

The main purpose of the epistle of 1 John is to show how we can fellowship with God.

Fellowship with the Father is the second kind of fellowship in this verse. It is the vertical fellowship. Horizontal fellowship among Christians is not possible without a prior vertical fellowship with the Father and the Son.

and with His Son Jesus Christ

Jesus alone makes fellowship with the Father possible. God reconciled us to Himself in Christ. Without Christ, our only identity with the Father is a Creator/creature relationship. With Christ, we can relate to God as a member of His family. Jesus made it possible to fellowship with the Father. We can fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

Principle: Vertical fellowship is the substructure to all fellowship.

Application: Eternal security and eternal assurance are two different ideas. Once we receive Christ as our Savior, our salvation is never in jeopardy (John 4:14; 6:32, 37-40). However, false teachers always come along trying to cast doubt on our salvation. God wants us to know how we can fellowship with Him with assurance. We can have assurance of fellowship with God based on the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).

Fellowship is impossible without a relationship. God provides the means of that relationship in His Son.

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

Probably no one will ever introduce you to the President of the United States. It would be nice to meet him but very few do. It is one thing to know about the President but it is another to meet him personally. As well, it is one thing to hear about the Lord Jesus but it is another thing to meet Him personally in salvation.

Many Christians know facts about the Father and the Son but they do not fellowship with them. This is the difference between religion and Christianity. Religion talks about God but Christianity fellowships with Him.

1 John 1:4

"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

John rounds off his prologue to 1 John with a personal touch – he wants their joy to be complete in knowing the basis of their fellowship (1:1-3).

And these things we write to you

John explicitly writes in the name of a number of apostles ("we") for the purpose that their readers will experience full joy.

that your joy may be full

God binds our joy tightly to fellowship with fellow believers and with God. Joy is a by-product of fellowship with God. The nature of our joy is in knowing our relationship to God. The nature of our joy then is in God Himself.

Acts 13:52 "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

The Greek tense of "may be full" emphasizes the state of completion. John's purpose in writing is that his readers would have continuing results of the completed state of joy in their lives.

Principle: The nature of the believer's joy is in God Himself.

Application: No non-Christian can have spiritual joy. They may have pleasure or even happiness but not joy. The Holy Spirit can fill the believer with "all joy."

Rom. 15:13 “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

We obtain joy by drawing on the promises of God (Jer. 15:16).

We find biblical joy in fellowship with God. It is God’s desire that each of His children has a complete joy. You may say, “No, I’m hurting too much. I’m trouble and distressed because of my frailty.”

There is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on what happens; that is, it depends on circumstances. If our circumstances are good, then we are happy. However, if our circumstances are poor, then we are unhappy. However, joy is independent from circumstances. Circumstances cannot affect our relationship with God.

All of us have people in our lives that we like being with. We enjoy their presence. If we can enjoy people around us, why can we not enjoy the presence of God? If we will enjoy fellowship with God in eternity, why not enjoy His fellowship in time?

You may insist, “That’s just the way I am. If I want to feel sad, don’t mess with me. That is my business”. The false assumption in those phrases is that we belong to ourselves. We are God’s possession. We have no right to limit God’s blessings in our lives. We have no right to displace God’s joy for a scheme of our own making.

1 John 1:5

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

We come to the first major division in the epistle. John now turns to the fundamentals of fellowship with God. We measure the reality of our fellowship with God by the principles in 1:5-2:2.

Verse 5 sets the stage for everything that follows to 2:2. God’s character is the standard for salvation and it is the standard for sanctification. He is the standard against which we evaluate everything in the Christian life. His character lays bare our phony and false claims: 1) that sin has no bearing on fellowship (1:6), 2) that we are not responsible

for our sin (1:8) and 3) denying the fact that we sin (1:10).

This is the message which we have heard from Him

John’s message came by direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1-2).

Gal. :12 “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The word “message” occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and 3:11. The idea is promise. There is a promise in resolving the daunting thought that God is absolute.

and declare to you,

The word “declare” means announce. The Son announced the message to the apostles in 1:3; now the apostles announce His message to the church.

that God is light

John often describes God as “light” (John 1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46; Re. 21:23). God is absolutely pure in all that He is whether it is truth or character. He is totally set apart from how man is; He is “holy”. God’s nature is completely incompatible with sin. This is the argument in 1:6,8,10. Christians who claim that they can sin and at the same time have fellowship with God are inconsistent with the nature of God. John argues against this idea with three “if we say” claims or slogans. Those who have active, unconfessed sin their lives cannot fellowship with an absolute God.

Three “if, then” clauses argue for how we can fellowship with God (1:7,9; 2:1-2). Jesus Christ and His work is the basis for fellowship with an absolute God. Jesus argues His death on the cross as our Advocate [lawyer]. It is only His death that can expiate our sin before such a God.

We cannot reverse the statement “God is light” to “light is God.” Christians do not worship the sun or light. Since “God is light”, what light is to the physical sphere, God is to us on a spiritual sphere. God is the Revealer – especially of His holiness. We do not discover God; He reveals Himself for His nature in itself is self-revealing.

Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the

strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?"

John 12:36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.' These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them."

1 Tim. 6:16 "...who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

Principle: What God is in Himself determines what we should be.

Application: God is more than a light or even the light; however, one of His attributes is light. He is light. This is one of His essential conditions. He subsists in inscrutable, incomparable, exquisite light. He cannot tolerate sin to any degree. That is why there is no hope within us to measure up to the character of God (Ro 3:10,23).

There is no shadow of turning in God. There is no shade much less any darkness. He is so infinitely holy that He is mutually exclusive from sin. God in essence has certain characteristics. God is righteous and just both in Himself and in His expression to others.

God is immutable; He cannot change His attitude toward Himself and He cannot change His attitude toward Himself. We change our attitudes constantly toward God but He can never change His character or attitudes toward us. We can count on what He promises us. He is always faithful to Himself and to us. His promises last for time and eternity. God is perfectly stable; we can always count on Him.

2 Tim. 2:13 "If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny Himself."

God cannot deny Himself or His word. He can never go back on His word because He is immutable. Human character is unstable but God is always stable. God knows each of our unfaithful acts toward Him. He does not treat us on the basis of how we treat Him; He always treats us on the basis of His own character.

and in Him is no darkness at all

The Greek is very emphatic – "no darkness whatsoever." There is not even a speck of darkness in the nature of God.

God's light is mutually exclusive from any amount or any kind of darkness. He is absolute in His being. He has no mixture but is pure in His character and actions. There is an absolute dichotomy between light and darkness in the nature of God.

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Christ is the light (John 8:12), that is, the revelation of God, the truth. Darkness is error and inconsistent with the nature of God because God is not compounded in His being. He does not have the slightest defect or imperfection in His nature. John's argument is that it is impossible to fellowship with an absolute God with human worth.

Yet, there is a dilemma in this fellowship. How can Christians who are not absolute fellowship with Someone who is absolute? What does a frail, sinful human being have in common with an absolute God? We cannot diminish the perfection of God for if we do, we diminish God Himself. Neither can we deny our sinfulness.

There is only one way, the only way to fellowship with an absolute God – by the bloodstained banner of the cross (1:7). It is only through the cross that we have the right to fellowship with such a God.

Col. 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Any assertion that God is not absolute is blasphemous and dangerous. This would imply that God is not one but dual in His being. He would be both righteous and unrighteous. He would be light and darkness, yin and yang. The Bible asserts that there is no darkness in Him whatsoever.

Any darkness is mutually exclusive from God, therefore, He is absolute. God's light can never mix with any form or degree of darkness. His righteousness excludes darkness. This is the basis of our spirituality. Light reveals but darkness conceals. Walking in darkness is the unwillingness

to see our sin or acknowledge our what is true. Walking in the light demands that we confess our sin, not deny it. Since there is no darkness in God whatsoever, Christians cannot co-exist with sin and with God at the same time. There is a dichotomy of light and darkness.

1 Thess. 5:5 "You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness."

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

We can comprehend God's absolute nature solely in God's Word. That is why the believer who wants to walk with God must search the Scripture. He cannot allow the claims of man as to who God is, to distort the unadulterated Word of God. That is what happened in John's day. Note the claims of 1:6,8,10. All these claims for spirituality deny the principles of the Word of God that God is absolute in His being. Those who deny this deny His word (1:6,8,10).

Principle: Mutual fellowship depends on mutual knowledge.

Application: Our ability to see in the dark is limited but if there is light then we have the ability see. This is the principle of revelation. God revealed Himself to the human race in such a way that no member of the human race will ever have an excuse for not responding to God and having eternal life.

John 8:12 "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

2 Cor. 4:6 "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

God's absoluteness exposes our sin and condemns it. There is no scintilla of sin in God for He is perfect in all that He is. It is impossible for God to sin. Immutability cannot sin.

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men

loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

A non-Christian cannot have fellowship with God in eternity because of the existence of at least one sin in his life. A Christian cannot fellowship with God in time if he has one unconfessed sin in his life. God declared him as perfect as the perfection that there is in the righteousness of Christ so he can have eternal fellowship with God. The believer can never lose the perfection of this righteousness.

1 Cor. 1:30 "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – 31 that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'"

The non-Christian can have eternal fellowship with God by accepting the righteousness of Christ by faith. The Christian can have fellowship with God in time by confessing his sin (1:9). He can never lose his positional status before God.

Eph. 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.'"

2 Cor. 6:14 "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"

Isaiah 9:2 "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."

1 John 1:6

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

This verse is the first of 3 false claims of spirituality (1:6,8,10). All these claims to spirituality are irreconcilable with the God whose character is pure, unadulterated light. John contrasts each claim against the truth.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him,

“Fellowship” means to share with. We cannot commune with God in fellowship while living in darkness.

and walk in darkness,

If we allow unconfessed sin to lounge in our souls, we cannot fellowship with God because sin and God are antagonistic to each other. If we deny that sin breaks fellowship with God, we undermine the idea unadulterated flawlessness in God.

The word “walk” means to walk around as a pattern of life. The person who walks in darkness is in a condition of unconfessed sin. He is out of phase with the character of God [“light”]. He does not resolve Himself to the absoluteness of God in his daily walk because he continues with unresolved sin in his life.

we lie

When we deny the incompatibility of God with sin, we enter self-evident self-deception. Any claim contrary to absolute perfection in God is a falsehood.

and do not practice the truth

It is one thing to believe truth but it is another to do truth. In biblical Christianity, truth is not only thinking and believing but also doing or acting. We must follow truth as well as believe it. Spirituality is impossible without showing itself in morality. Truth is more than creed or doctrine because genuine truth always affects our comportment.

Truth always illuminates the soul. Darkness is the absence of light. Wherever there is no light, there is darkness. Truth resides in the translucent atmosphere where we can see our impurities against the absolute character of God.

Principle: We cannot fellowship with a God of absolute perfection without confessing our sins.

Application: Those who claim to fellowship with God but continue in sin without confessing their sin, just kid themselves. They are not in fellowship.

A crucial element to the Christian life is the recognition and acknowledgement of our sin. If we do not confess our sin, we walk in darkness. We reserve a dark side to our soul. Darkness is the absence of life. Walking in the light means that we are open to God. We are not afraid to expose any aspect of our lives to Him.

God cannot fellowship with us while we have unconfessed sin in our lives otherwise that would involve God in our sin. The person who rides in a getaway car from a bank robbery is just as guilty as the men who robbed the bank. God always is true to His integrity and honesty.

1 John 1:7

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

Verse 7 introduces the counter-claim to the false claim in verse 6 of walking in fellowship with God.

But if we walk in the light

Believers who want to walk with God must walk in the light. We fellowship with God on God’s terms and not on our terms. We conform to God; God does not conform to us.

Eph. 5:8 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.’”

Col. 1:12 “...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and

conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

as He is in the light,

The basis of fellowship with God is God Himself. When we walk in the light, we walk according to the light. God is in the light for He exists in the sphere of truth and righteousness.

1 Tim. 6:16 "...who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

we have fellowship with one another,

"Fellowship with one another" is not fellowship with other Christians but fellowship with God. When we walk according to the character of God, we can fellowship with God. Genuine fellowship with God can only occur if we live in the sphere of God's character [light].

We can fellowship with God because we hold something in common with Him. Christians have continuity of fellowship with Him because the blood of Christ resolves the sin issue. We can walk in the light because of Christ, not because of human merit.

Principle: God determines our fellowship with Him on His character, not our character.

Application: Walking in darkness is walking out of phase with God, not in accordance with the truth. Darkness is absence of light. When we step out of phase with God, we walk in darkness. We turn our volition away from the truth of God concerning our lives. This makes us susceptible to not examine ourselves honestly. If we do not examine ourselves, we will not apply truth to experience. We then walk in delusion.

Eph. 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."

When we walk in the light, we become easier to live with. We are more compassionate and gracious. We walk without pretense before others. We are transparent and genuine with others. We are transparent with God.

1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the

praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

The nearer we get to God the more terrible our sin seems to us. Living in fellowship with God means that we do not demonstrate our anger as often as we used to do. We live according to our claim to walk with the God of light. We are not as critical and negative as we used to be.

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son

The "blood of Jesus Christ" is a metonymy [a figure of speech used for the name of one thing for that of another associated with it] for the death of Jesus on the cross. It does not refer to His literal blood (it took His literal blood to make possible the sacrificial substitution of His life for ours).

Note the name "Jesus" here - "Jesus Christ His Son." "Jesus" is the human name of Christ. Jesus was more than a human for He was the "Son;" He was God Himself. The Gnostics taught that he was a mere man. However, He is more; He is the God-man.

Principle: Fellowship with God is possible because of the everlasting worth of the blood of Christ.

Application: The Bible everywhere asserts the redemptive value of blood (Ex 11:4-6; 12:13; He 9:20-22). Although Jesus shed His blood 2000 years ago, His blood still cleanses today. Fellowship with God is possible because of the lasting value of the blood of Christ. His blood is efficacious for any sin we might commit.

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Rom. 3:25 "...whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed..."

Rom. 5:9 "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Col. 1:20 "...and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or

things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

Eph. 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..."

Eph. 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Heb. 9:22 "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Heb. 13:12 "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate."

Heb. 13:20 "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant..."

Rev. 1:5 "...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

Rev. 5:9 "And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..."

The blood of Christ applies to only those who believe. Christ died for all but only those who engage with the promises can receive God's forgiveness. We can do nothing to receive cleansing. We accept it by faith. It is only when the believer confesses his sins that his forgiveness becomes actual.

cleanses us

Cleansing from sin is a prerequisite for fellowship with God. The blood of Christ continually cleanses the believer from sin (present tense). To the degree that we live in the light of who God is, we can fellowship with Him. This is no fresh removal of sin but that Jesus removes our sin on the ground of His expiatory death on the cross. Both justification and sanctification rest on the blood of Christ.

We get our English word "cathartic" from the Greek word for "cleanses." The blood of Christ cleanses us from sin on a temporal, daily basis.

from all sin

Note that the blood of Christ cleanses us from "all sin." God cleanses all sin, not some sin. The idea is that the blood of Christ cleanses us from any and every sin that we might commit. There is no sin beyond the cleansing power of the cross. He cleanses us from sins committed consciously or unconsciously.

Christ can cleanse us from any sin that might occur. God has just claims against us because of our personal sin but Jesus' blood satisfies the holy demands of God. The death of Christ on the cross fully saves sinners.

Principle: Cleansing from sin is a prerequisite for fellowship with God.

Application: In addition to positional sanctification, believers need a progressive sanctification. God sanctifies us positionally one time at the point of salvation (1 Cor. 6:11). After salvation, we need to continually grow in holiness. That is the progressive cleansing of 1:7 and 1:9.

Just as light and darkness cannot co-exist with one another, so sin and God cannot co-exist together. God is absolute perfection and cannot co-exist with sin in any sense. A believer with active, unconfessed sin in his life cannot walk or fellowship with God. He cannot lose his standing with God but he can lose his fellowship with God.

Fellowship with God as a Christian depends on confession of sin. A carnal Christian cannot fellowship with God. However, God cleanses the carnal Christian if he confesses his sin. There is a cleansing after salvation (1:9). The basis of forgiveness after we become a Christian is the same as when we became Christians.

When we become Christians, we establish an eternal relationship with God. However, at the moment sin comes into our lives, we break fellowship with God. Sin puts a cloud between us. There is something between the soul and the Savior. Your son is still your son even though he may have shamed the family. He is still in the family although there is a strain on your fellowship.

Walking in the light means that we hide nothing from God. We do not rationalize our sin away but admit it and deal with it.

1 John 1:8

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

Verse 8 gives the second false claim of spirituality. Some Christians in John’s day erroneously contend that they have no guilt due to their sin. They listened to Cerinthus, a false teacher living in Ephesus, who gave them the song and dance that they do not need to accept guilt for their sin.

If we say that we have no sin,

John asserts that some of his readers denied personal guilt for their state of sin. Christians will not admit a condition of sin if they do not face up to how they violate God. Denial of a condition of sin blunts repentance from sin. An unexamined life is a weak and ineffective life.

we deceive ourselves,

The first claim in verse 6 was a lie but the claim of this verse is self-deception. We just kid ourselves if we think that we do not have the capacity to sin. Denial of sin is self-deception and defies the veracity of God. It is possible to cheat ourselves.

Principle: Denial of the existence of sin in our lives is self-deception and blunts our ability to repent of sin.

Application: Some believers hop on the latest trends of spirituality no matter how astray they might be from the Word of God. False teachers usually have great personalities and can communicate effectively. They are normally sweet and likeable people. That is the primary reason Bible believing Christians fall for their false teaching.

Many Christians today believe the lies that they create their own destiny, that they are independent and that they sustain themselves. This is autonomy from God.

Sin always breaks fellowship with God. Rebellion against God’s truth always leads us into self-deception and error. We fool no one but ourselves. We need to be honest about the sin that is in our lives so that we can deal with it effectively.

Gal. 6:3 “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

and the truth is not in us

Self-deception arises from openness to false teaching (2:18,26; 3:7; 4:3,6). Christians constantly face frontal attacks from the demonic world of false teaching. Those who bite on false teaching render their Christian lives weak and dull.

Principle: Self-deception preempts truth as an efficacious principle in our lives.

Application: Truth in the Bible is more than flat or abstract ideas about the Bible because biblical truth requires an engagement of what we believe with our lives. We live out truth by believing truth, doing truth. If we deceive ourselves, truth cannot be in us. It shuts out truth. If truth truly rests in us, it exposes the awfulness of our sin so that we cannot lightly explain it away.

Just because we are not aware of sin in our lives, that does not mean that we are free from transgression. A Spirit-filled believer does not deceive himself. He is radically honest with himself for fear that he might step out of favor with God.

We need to discover again the power of biblical Christianity. When we walk with God based on truth, we live in the power of God. Christianity is primarily a relationship, not a religion. When a Christian steps out of fellowship with God, he loses the vitality of Christianity. He no longer has the power for living he once had. His Christianity becomes orthodox, dull and dead. He deceives himself that he walks with God.

Believers who walk in integrity do not hide their sin but face it and admit it. God wants us to call sin for what it is (1:9). He wants us to admit our need for the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our sin. Sensitivity to truth always makes us more aware of personal sin.

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.”

Verse 9 is the reverse of verse 8. Confession of sin is the opposite to the claim that we are not guilty of sin. This verse is a counter-claim to verse eight that Christians are not guilty of sin. The Christian who denies guilt deceives himself.

Verse 7 is cleansing from the principle of sin whereas verse 9 is cleansing from the practice of sin.

If

The “if” here is hypothetical. Maybe we will confess and maybe we will not confess. It is conditional on our will or volition.

we confess

The word “confess” means to speak the same thing, to assent, accord, agree with, concede, acknowledge. The idea is to confess by means of admitting guilt. Confession is saying what God says about our sins – that they are violations of God’s character. Sins are not blunders or mistakes but desecration of the character of God. There is a danger in losing fellowship with God if we conceal our sins.

Principle: Confession is the basis for fellowship with God because it acknowledges any violations of His character.

Application: Walking in the light involves increased consciousness of our sinful unrighteousness and taking active steps to rid ourselves of that sin by claiming God’s forgiveness and cleansing through open confession of sin before God.

Believers who desire to walk with God confess their sin openly and frankly to God. We make the judgment that our sins are awful before God. We agree with God in condemning sin.

Confession does not mean to plead with God for forgiveness, to pray for forgiveness, to feel sorry for sins or to make restitution for our sins. No, the idea is to accept the idea that our sins violate an absolutely holy God and that our only solution for sin is the death of Christ on the cross.

Some claim that there is no need to confess sin because we already have forgiveness (Ep 1:7). This idea confuses positional forgiveness with experiential forgiveness. God finally and fully forgives us in our positional forgiveness. In this sense, we never need forgiveness again. God forensically forgives us forever in positional forgiveness. However, when it comes to fellowship with God, we need to confess specific violations to God’s character.

The forgiveness of 1:9 is experiential forgiveness. God always bases our experiential forgiveness on our positional forgiveness. A son may fall out of disfavor with his family but he is still a member of the family. The issue in experiential forgiveness is not acceptance by God but fellowship with Him. Continual forgiveness allows us to fellowship with God on an ongoing basis.

We always view sin for what it really is – a violation of God’s character. That is why God will forgive our sin only based on the cross of Christ. God forgives sin when Christ paid the penalty for that sin. Jesus meets all of the Father’s holy demands by His payment for sins on the cross. Jesus died in the sinner’s stead; He died in our place. It cost Jesus Christ a great deal to qualify us for forgiveness.

our sins,

Sins in the plural refer to acts of sins, particular sins (not the sin capacity or sin nature). These are sins that we know as sins. The moment a believer sins, he breaks his fellowship with God.

Immediate confession of a particular sin restores that fellowship.

Principle: We confess personal sins, not deny them.

Application: The Lord Jesus takes care of our broken fellowship with God in glory. He intercedes for you personally. If we confess our sins, Jesus will take care of every thing else. The basis of forgiveness is not our morality but the substitutionary death of Christ to take our place in suffering for sin.

Heb. 7:25 “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those [believers] who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

We confess our sins; we do not deny them. Note that we are not to ask God to forgive our sins. God forgave our sins at the moment we trusted the death of Christ to pay for our sins. God has already forgiven the believer in Christ.

The idea of confession is calling sin what God calls it – anger, jealousy, pride, malice, bitterness. We call sin exactly what God calls it. We do not cover it up. We do not squirt perfume on it. We do not rename it. Confession means to name sin the kind of sin it is, label it for what God says it is.

If you are irritable and angry then admit to God that you were angry. If you are full of pride, tell God you are a proud person. If you are selfish, tell God you are selfish. Call the particular sin for what it is before God. Don't call it by distorted terms such as a "mistake." That is a fancy toe dance away from admitting your guilt. Just say, "Lord, I am angry, proud, selfish and bitter."

Tell God the truth. Be honest with Him. There is no way to fellowship with God and not be on the level with Him. You do not confess private sins in public but in private communion with God. This is a matter between you and God alone. If your sin involves someone else then you want to deal with that later. Go to the person at that time and get it straight.

We do not have the right to regret our sins once we confess them. Feeling sorry for sin is an attempt to displace the work of Christ. Jesus accepted the responsibility for our sins on the cross. He personally paid the price for our sins. Therefore, the Christian should have no delusions about his ability to satisfy an absolutely holy God by something he does. Only Jesus can do that.

Some people believe that if they feel sorry for their sins, they will not do it again. Sorrow has nothing to do with resisting sin. Only a person controlled by the Holy Spirit can resist sin.

He is faithful

God's forgiveness rests in two attributes of God – His faithfulness and His justice. God will always act according to His character.

God is true to His promises. He is always consistent with His character. God is never unfaithful to His Word. He never breaks His Word. God faithfully forgives us because of Christ's death for us. He does nothing unfair.

Jer. 31:34 " ...For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Heb. 10:23 "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

Heb. 11:11 "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

and just

God does nothing contrary to His character. He is always just and true to Himself. God's justice is His moral self-consistency. He always acts in uprightness in keeping with His own character.

God does not cleanse us because of love, mercy or kindness but always based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. God's forgiveness is always consistent with His justice because Jesus took the penalty for our sin. We can depend on God's righteousness to forgive us if we confess our sin.

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

Principle: God must always be true to Himself.

Application: It would be an insufferable contradiction if God were forced to violate His own righteous in order to forgive our unrighteousness. The same attribute of justice that demands sin's punishment guarantees our forgiveness.

God is faithful to Himself, His Son and His Word. He is just and right in everything He does. He always operates on the level. God will not make you crawl and cower before Him to receive His forgiveness. He does not require righteousness from us to receive forgiveness; all He requires is the death of Christ on the cross.

Christianity is not operation bootstraps. God does not ask for our blood but the blood of Christ.

to forgive us our sins

God does two things based on His character:

- 1) Forgive the sins we confess and
- 2) Cleanse us from sins we forget to confess.

Forgiveness is the result of God's faithfulness and justice. Forgiveness is also conditional – upon "confession." The word "forgive" means to cancel, remit, pardon, send away, dismiss. Sin always incurs debt to God. The idea then is that God removes our guilt for wrongdoing when we confess our sin.

Matt. 26:28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins."

The forgiveness here is instantaneous (aorist). God forgives in a moment of time and once for all. He does not throw the sin you confess in your face to taunt you with it.

Principle: God forever dismisses our sin upon confession of the specific sin.

Application: There are two kinds of forgiveness in the New Testament:

- 1) Eternal forgiveness which all of us receive at the moment of salvation.
- 2) Temporal forgiveness, which we receive at the confession of specific sins.

We find eternal forgiveness in Ephesians 1:7.

Eph. 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..."

Temporal forgiveness restores the believer to fellowship with God (our verse). We "grieve" the Holy Spirit by not confessing sin (Ep 4:30). We can also "quench" the Spirit by not yielding ourselves to God's will (1 Thess. 5:19).

God dismisses our sin upon confession. Forgiveness is a form of forgetting. If God forgets our sins then we must forget them as well. We cannot allow a guilt complex to haunt us after God forgives us.

Phil. 3:13 "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

The word "cleanse" means to make clean, purify. Not only does God forgive us for the sins we confess but He cleanses us from the sins we forget to confess. If we confess the sins of which we are aware, God will forgive us for the sins of which we are unaware. God cleanses us from anything that would prevent a believer from being right with God.

Note the word "all." God will never overlook the slightest bit of unrighteousness in us but He will

cleanse the slightest unrighteousness. God cleanses us all overt and covert sins. He cleanses us from conscious sins and from unwitting sins. In His cleansing, He takes care of sins of commission and omission.

Principle: If we confess our known sins, God will forgive us the sins we forgot to confess.

Application: You have committed hundreds of sins you forgot to confess. What do you do with them? Are you perpetually out of fellowship with God because you forgot to confess them? The point of cleansing us from all unrighteousness is that if we confess the sins we know, God will forgive us of the sins we forgot to confess. This is grace upon grace.

1 John 1:10

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

Note that each false claim in 6, 8 and 10 denies the truth that immediately precedes it in verses 5, 7 and 9 respectively. The corrective to follows in the verse immediately following the false claim.

Now we come to the third false plea. This claim is a denial of having committed any sin at all.

If we say that we have not sinned,

Sin is an ongoing reality in the life of Christians because God is a God of absolute perfection. John is still dealing with the idea that "God is light" (1:5). To deny that fact is to fool ourselves and reject the Word of God.

we make Him a liar,

If we claim that we have not sinned, we make God out to be a liar. We say in effect that what God says about Himself in the Bible about our sin is not right. This claim is completely inconsistent with God's character. What an awful thing to make God out to be a liar!

and His word is not in us

God's Word always confronts our sin. We either admit or deny what the Word says about our sins. If we deny that we have sin in our lives, we fly in the face of the Word of God. We do not appropriate properly the principles of the Word to our experience.

The word "in us" indicates intimate fellowship. The Word of God does not have intimate

fellowship with those who claim to be free from sin.

Principle: Openness to the full integrity of the Word of God is essential for fellowship with an absolutely holy God.

Application: If we claim that sin is not sin, we dismiss the reality of an absolute God and set ourselves up as the standard for what is right and wrong. A person who claims to be free from sin is a super snob. The sinless perfectionist or the person who denies committing actual acts of sin is a super snob.

We live in a day when our society denies the distinction between light and darkness. Tolerance is the only norm of consensus for North America. God says that this is dangerous. It is even more dangerous when Christians do not use biblical discernment to indicate what is right and wrong. We make God a liar in this.

We are people of rationalization: "Other people are conceited but I am a person of self-respect. If someone else takes initiative, he is presumptuous; if I take initiative, I am creative. When others lose their tempter, they are angry; when I show indignation over something, it is righteous anger. Others are prejudice; I have convictions." Nice labels do not change the poison inside the bottle. The problem is not circumstance but sin. We need to admit and confess this to God.

The more sensitive we are to the Word of God, the quicker we will detect our sin and confess it. It can take some time for the Spirit to convict us of sins of omission and ignorance. We cannot confess sin until the Holy Spirit brings us to conviction of a sin. In the mean time the first two verses of chapter two take care of our situation during our time of no confession.

Rom. 14:23 "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

James 4:17 "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

If we want to walk in unbroken fellowship with the Lord, we must confess our sin. The believer cannot have anything between the soul and the Savior for God to fellowship with him. We

acknowledge any guile, bitterness or hard feelings that we might have toward others.

1 John 2

1 John 2:1

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

My little children,

John addresses his readers affectionately as his spiritual children. He views them as a family. The word "children" is an affectionate term regardless of age. This is a title that God gives to all His children; it is His name for all the family of God.

these things I write to you,

The purpose of writing 1 John is that believers would have a means for addressing sin issues. This is an argument against the idea that Christians must engage in inevitable habitual sinful behavior.

John does not write so that his readers have justification for their sin (1:6,8,10) but that they might conquer sin. Although Christians sin (1:10), they can conquer sin - "so that you may not sin."

so that you may not sin.

John writes with the purpose that his readers will have a safeguard against sinning. If we practice sin, we will become more proficient in it. That is how we were before we received Jesus as our Savior. Now, it is altogether different; we have Someone to live for. John's desire is that his readers will not sin at the point of temptation.

Principle: Although believers are not free from sin they can overcome sin.

Application: Temptation never becomes a sin until we allow our negative volition to yield to sin. There is no sin in being tempted but it is a sin to yield to temptation. Once the temptation becomes a sin, there is a danger of entering into carnality and dominance of sin unless we confess the sin.

Although we are not in a state of carnality when we commit an act of sin, we do step out of fellowship with the Lord. If we go on without confessing, we make ourselves vulnerable to domination of our sin capacity. Because God is

absolute, spirituality must be absolute (1:5). We cannot be 50% spiritual and 50% carnal. At any point of time, either the Spirit controls us or our sin capacity controls us.

Before we came to Christ sin was the rule rather than the exception. Now when the child of God falls into sin, he grieves the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus. He even grieves himself. That is why we do not remain in sin with a clean conscience. The believer who wants to stay in tune with God confesses his sin immediately (1:9). He restores fellowship as soon as possible. He keeps short accounts with God.

Many believers get into a zigzag orientation in their daily walk with God. All of us have had this experience. It is one thing to commit individual acts of sin and immediately confess them but another thing to cave into the power of our sin capacity. The cross gives victory over the power of sin. By confession, we appeal to the cross and have the right to fellowship with God. Jesus broke the back of our sin capacity on the cross.

And if anyone sins,

Should a Christian sin, he has wherewithal to address his sin – a Lawyer in heaven who satisfied the absolute demands of the Father’s absolute being.

we have an Advocate

The words “we have” indicate that the advocacy of Jesus begins at the moment we commit a single sin. Jesus instantaneously and constantly is at our disposal whether we realize it or not. This is true regardless whether we appreciate or not. He will always come to our side to help us with our sin issue before an absolute God.

Jesus is more than a Savior and more than Lord, He is our Advocate or Lawyer. He is with the Father and intercedes on our behalf to the Father. An advocate is someone called along side to help. An advocate comes to someone’s aid. Secular Greek used “advocate” as a court term to denote a legal assistant, counsel for defense. Jesus as our Advocate pleads our cause; He is our Intercessor.

The word “advocate” occurs 5 times in the Greek New Testament. Other occurrences translate it by “comforter.” All 4 of the other occurrences refer to the Holy Spirit.

We have a Defense Attorney in Jesus Christ and another Defense Attorney in the Holy Spirit. Jesus defends us against the accusations of the Devil because of our sin (Re 12:10). The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live the Christian life (Ro 6:12-14; 8:12,13; 1 Cor. 15:34; Titus 2:11,12; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

Principle: God makes provision for the sins of the believer.

Application: God provides a double advocacy for the believer: 1) the Lord Jesus Christ interceding in heaven and 2) the Holy Spirit comforting on earth. Jesus’ advocacy is finished – that is the basis of His plea against the accusations of Satan against the believer.

In addition to our two Advocates, the Father has an Advocate – the Holy Spirit. Jesus takes care of all our affairs over there. The Father has an advocate who takes care of His concerns over here. God has an Advocate with us and we have an Advocate with Him.

John 14:16 “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [advocate], that He may abide with you forever – 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

The word “another” indicates that there are two comforters. Jesus says, “I am Comforter number one but I will ask the Father to give you another comforter. This comforter will be similar to me.” The Holy Spirit is to us what Jesus was to the 12 apostles. This is the first occurrence of the word “comforter.”

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

The Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus’ representative here. He is the one and only Vicar of Christ. He personally represents the Lord Jesus in time on earth. He helps us in our infirmities (Ro 8:26).

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

The preceding two verses indicated that the Father sent the Spirit. Now this verse indicates that Jesus

sent the Spirit. Both the Father and the Son dispatched the Holy Spirit to earth. The Holy Spirit always bears witness to the Lord Jesus.

John 16:7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

This is the fourth and final occurrence outside 1 John. The Lord Jesus in His humanity cannot be over there and over here at the same time.

with the Father,

This is the third time we have had the title "Father" in this epistle. Each time the preposition "with" occurs with the title.

1:2 "...and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us..."

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

The place of Jesus' advocacy is "with the Father." The word "with" means facing, turning towards. Jesus directs our cause to the Father. Jesus always enjoys unhindered access to and communion with the Father. Jesus does not represent rebellious creatures to God as the Creator but erring children to the Father.

The Father is the Maker of all His creatures but He is only the Father to His dear children - "little children" [born ones].

Principle: Jesus defends us against the accusations of the Devil.

Application: Jesus is our defense Attorney against the accusations of Satan. The name "Satan" means accuser (Job 1:6-11; Zech 3:1-2; Re 12:9,10). He has a worldwide network of agents (demons) that report on believers everywhere. Jesus is our Advocate for each allegation. He represents us in the highest court of all - the final court of an absolute God.

We retained a Defense Attorney when we believed in the finality of the death of Christ on behalf of our sin. Christ bore all our sin on the cross. There is no suffering for sin that needs to be suffered.

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

1 Peter 2:24 "...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit..."

Rev. 1:5 "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"

The Father judged all of our sins for all time on the cross. There is therefore no more penalty to be paid for sin. There is a law in civil government called "the law of double jeopardy." This law says in effect that a person cannot pay for the same crime twice. If Christ paid for our sins, then we do not have to pay for them. He did it all; all to Him we owe. That is why God throws Satan's accusations out of court. God has already judged our sin on the cross.

The sin of the believer is a family of God matter. Should we sin without confession then God takes us to the woodshed (He 12:6-7). God disciplines his family members should any of them stay out of fellowship very long.

The moment we confess our sins, God restores us into fellowship. He does this on the merit of Christ and the work He did on the cross. That is why God can throw the accusations of Satan out of court with good conscience.

Jesus Christ the righteous

Jesus is not only our Advocate but a "righteous" Advocate. Jesus is "righteous" as our Advocate. He pleads for us on the ground of His perfect righteousness and justice. Although Jesus can say little good of us, He can say plenty for us. He can plead His own righteousness for us.

Rom. 8:34 "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

Heb. 7:25 "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through

Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

The word "righteous" is an added qualification to the name "Jesus Christ." "Jesus" is His human name and "Christ" is the term for Jesus' Messiahship.

Principle: Jesus stands in towering majesty above all men and is exclusively qualified to intercede for us.

Application: Jesus stands in towering supremacy above all men. There is no one that compares to the magnificent Son of God. He is the sinless, spotless Son – the Great Unlike.

"Jesus Christ the righteous" is the essence of our advocacy for He is absolute righteousness. Jesus pleads our cause before the Judge; He is our counsel for defense. He is an intercessor for us. Jesus pleads at the right hand of the Father when we commit sins.

1 John 2:2

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

We have twofold provision in Jesus Christ: 1) an Intercessor and 2) a Propitiator. Verse one set forth Jesus as our Intercessor. Verse two sets forth Jesus as our Propitiator – the One who satisfies the holy demands of an absolute God (1:5).

Chapter 1 should have ended with 2:2. John set forth 3 claims and 3 counterclaims. Verses 1 and 2 are the last counterclaim.

And He Himself

Normally priest and sacrifice are distinct but here they are the same. Jesus is not only our Intercessor but He is the sacrifice for our sins as well. Jesus can plead our cause because of what He did. He does not plead our cause for what we did do or will do.

The Greek puts great emphasis on the person of the propitiator. Christ alone is able to propitiate God. He is in His own person and work, the propitiation. This connects closely with His role as our Defense Attorney (2:1). Jesus' work of propitiation gives efficacy to His work of intercession.

is the propitiation for our sins,

This word "propitiation" is not the same word as is found in Romans 3:25. The word in Romans refers to the "mercy seat," the meeting place between God and man. The word in our verse carries the idea of expiation. My sin does not undo the sacrifice of Christ for my sin. That is why Jesus undertakes my case before the Father when I sin.

We need to distinguish between expiation and appeasement. Expiation refers to payment of penal exaction or punishment leveled against our sin. Appeasement refers to turning away God's wrath. Propitiation refers to the full satisfaction of the absolute, holy and righteous character of God. "Mercy seat" was the place of propitiation. In the New Testament it is the shed blood of the body of Christ.

Jesus as our Defense Attorney is His office but His role in propitiation is the satisfaction He offers to the Father that makes it possible for Him to officiate in the office of Defense Attorney. The Defense Attorney offers Himself as the basis of satisfaction!

Propitiation is a term of appeasement. Jesus' death on the cross appeased the wrath of God against our sin. God must be just or consistent with Himself. He is absolute in His being and He can never compromise His character in any way.

The New Testament uses "propitiation" in the sense of satisfaction, appeasing. Jesus satisfies the demands of an absolute God. We cannot by our merit bring God into favor with ourselves. God is always propitiated by the atonement sacrifices of the Old Testament or the work of Christ on the cross.

Death for sin vindicates God's righteous character. The person who believes in this propitiatory sacrifice appeases the wrath of God. Jesus forever broke down the barrier between God and man in His work on the cross. He annuls the authority of sin to separate us from God. We satisfy the holy demands of God through faith in the blood of Christ. God makes actual the efficacy of the propitiation by those who believe in the means of appeasing God – the death of Christ for our sins.

Rom. 3:25 whom God set forth as a propitiation [mercy seat] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His

righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed..."

Jesus did not just make satisfaction for our sins but who He is and what He did is satisfaction itself. God puts great value on the blood of Christ to save us. God is satisfied! Our Advocate pleads our cause on this basis. It is His brief before the almighty, absolute God. Jesus pleads His work on the cross.

Principle: Jesus' death on the cross satisfies the absolute demands of God's holy character.

Application: Note that the statement is not, "If I repent, I have an Advocate" or, "If I confess my sins, I have an Advocate." The statement is, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." I have an Advocate whether I repent or not.

Jesus is always our Advocate whether for sins confessed or sins unconfessed. Jesus takes up my case every time I sin. He represents me to the Father without exception. Sin does not touch the issue of our relationship to the Father but it does relate to the issue of our fellowship with the Father. That is why we must confess our sin to get back in communion with Him (1:9). The Father is more than ready to receive us back into fellowship when we do.

The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ for our sins satisfied the demands of an absolutely holy God. He took our penalty for our sin as our substitute. He took our hell that we might have His heaven.

John 1:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

Heb. 9:26 "He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Heb. 10:10 "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

1 Peter 1:18 "...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by

tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Why we do make such an issue over Jesus? He died for us. He took our hell. He gave Himself for us. He took our rap. We go to heaven free of charge because of Him. That undermines all religion because it undercuts any attempt at morality to gain God's approval. Religion, morality, church rites, baptism and confirmation cannot cut any ice with God to gain salvation. None of it will take you to heaven. Only the final, finished work of Christ's suffering on the cross can give you eternal life.

God dismisses Satan's case against us because of the blood of Christ. Jesus' appeal is perfect. It will not help to say, "Oh, I will never do it again." This is ridiculous. The frequency of sinning is another matter. We can get out of fellowship occasionally or for long periods of time. The great objective is sin less so that confession is only necessary occasionally.

and not for ours only

Jesus did not only die for believers but He died for unbelievers as well.

The word "ours" is a strong term placing emphasis on this word. This "ours" includes John; he was not sinlessly perfect though an apostle.

Principle: Christians are uniquely responsible for their sin.

Application: God does not argue with the non-Christian about their sins but he does with the Christian. Christians are more responsible for their sins than the non-Christian.

It is easy to fall into despair over our sins as Christians. The reason for this is that we think the resolution lies within ourselves. This is especially truth when we look at the God of light - absolute in His righteousness. That is why we cannot plead our righteousness else there would be no hope. Our only plea is Jesus Christ's righteousness and sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus does not plead for our innocence but He pleads for our guilt. He knows our guilt but pleads His blood as a proper appeasement for sin. The basis of Jesus' appeal is not His plea. The Father would not respond to a simple plea for

forgiveness; He needs a basis for forgiveness. He does not respond to simple manipulation of words; He requires something consistent with His nature – justification for forgiveness.

Therefore, God is propitious. God always deals with believers on the basis of the blood of Christ. Christ has an absolute right plea for us because He suffered all that needs to be suffered as far as the Father is concerned. Jesus transferred the perfection of His righteousness to our account.

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

but also for the whole world

Jesus death for sin is sufficient for all although it is efficient for only those who place their trust in His death for sin. Jesus died for more than the “elect.” The “whole world” does not mean the world of the elect.

2 Cor. 5:14 “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

2 Cor. 5:19 “...that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

Heb. 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

The word “but” is a strong adversative – a marked contrast. Not only did Jesus die for the saved but He died for the lost! This is a firm rejection of limited atonement. This does not imply that God will save everyone (2 Cor. 5:14-15,19).

John 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His

Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

John 6:51 “ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

1 Tim. 2:6 “...who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time...”

Heb. 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

Principle: Jesus paid for all the sins for all non-Christians.

Application: Jesus not only paid for the sins of Christians but for the sins of non-Christians. He paid for the sins of every person. No one is ineligible to receive forgiveness. However, the non-Christian must appropriate by faith the provision of the death of Christ for his sin.

That qualification preempts the idea of universal salvation for all regardless of trust in Christ. God confronts the lost world, not with its sins, but with His own dear Son who is the satisfaction for all sin.

Jesus did not die just for moral, religious people. He did not solely die for Christians. He died for all. This is good news to those without Christ. Jesus died for everyone. He did not die for white people; He died for people of all color and race.

2 Peter 2: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them [Jesus even died for lost false teachers], and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

1 John 4:14 “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”

1 John 2:3

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

Verse 3 makes a transition into a new line of thought. This verse begins the first of three tests for fellowship with God. These three tests for fellowship is a response to the three false claims in chapter one (1:6,8,10). John gives assurances of this fellowship (2:3,5).

This section launches three claims to intimate fellowship with God articulated by the word “knowledge.” This is how the believer can know that he knows the “God of light” (1:5). Walking in the light not only reveals our omissions but also our obligations, not only our disobedience but also our duties.

If we walk in the light, there will be a threefold response:

1. Fellowship with God (2:3-4).
2. Appropriation of the principles of the Word by faith (2:5).
3. Constant fellowship with God (2:6).

These 3 tests show us how we validate whether we are in fellowship with the Lord or not.

Now by this

We know that we know God by appropriating the attorneyship of Jesus Christ to our experience. Our appropriation of the advocacy of Jesus gives us assurance of fellowship with God. This is the “by this.” Jesus will never lose a case before the Father. His defense is always the same – His work on the cross for past and present sins.

we know

There is a test whereby we know that we have fellowship with God – if we safeguard the principles of the Word of God for daily living.

The Gnostic false teachers claimed to know God in a transcendent way. The word “Gnostic” means knowing ones. They thought all that they needed was sublime insight. They aspired to embrace the deity to which they formed a part. Their knowledge of God was mystical and rhapsody oriented.

The Gnostics knowledge was so ethereal that they did not have time to practice the principles of the

Word. They knew God only in an abstract way but not personally as knowing someone intimately. The believer knows God through personal knowledge of the incarnate Son of God, the “Word of life.” We know God in Christ.

Principle: Fellowship with God cannot exist apart from application of the principles of the Word to experience.

Application: Knowing God is not speculative knowledge about God but personal knowledge concerning Him. Biblical knowledge is more than intellectual knowledge or having accurate information about Him. Rather, it is to have intimate fellowship with Him.

There is a clear distinction between relationship and fellowship, between union and communion. We establish relationship with God at the moment of salvation never to lose it again. However, we can lose fellowship with God. When we desire and decide to apply God’s Word to experience, then we fellowship with Him.

There is more than emotion here because emotion flees with the wind. There is also more than cold intellectualism here because that does not have dynamic fellowship with the Lord. Both emotion void of content and academic deadness are not indications of fellowship with the Lord. Emotions satisfy our senses but they do not satisfy the mind.

Either Christians today do not want principle or they do not want application. Those that do not want principle want pure emotion. They live their Christian lives devoid of exposure to the principles of the Word. Others want the principles of the Word but they do not apply those principles to their experience. These people do not respond to the teaching of God’s Word but live by the seat of their pants.

Both are wrong.

Je 9:23 “Thus says the Lord:

**Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;
24 But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,**

That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight, says the Lord."

that we know Him,

The Gnostics taught that intellectual achievement was the highest good but Christians realize genuine fellowship in the application of truth to experience. Raw academic knowledge is not good enough. We must engage ourselves with the Word of God.

The two occurrences of the word "know" emphasize the idea of fellowship with God. "Know" occurs 23 times in 1 John so it is obviously an important word. The idea of knowledge here is knowledge gained by mediation, by fellowship. The idea of knowing in the Bible involves more than understanding but entails the whole person.

Sometimes the Bible uses "know" for sexual intimacy. Knowing God involves sharing His life (2:4,6). This involves doing His will. Knowing God is a corollary to "walking in the light." It is the reality of our fellowship with God.

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

The tense of the word "know" carries the idea that they knew fellowship with the Lord in the past with present reality. The result of our past relationship with the Lord has present effects.

Principle: We validate experience by certain consequence of our desire and decisions.

Application: It is not our claim to fellowship that is important but whether we validate it by appropriating principle to experience. A changed life is a sign of a changed heart and an unchanged life is a sign of an unchanged heart. How can we be sure that we are in fellowship with the Lord? Only by taking action on living out God's principles for life can we know that we have authentic fellowship with Him.

"Knowing" is knowing more than that we are Christians but this carries the idea of knowing that we "abide" in fellowship with the Lord. Application of the Christian way of life to our experience (principles of the Word) determines fellowship. This is the prerequisite to fellowship.

God demands that we respond to His ordained authority for life. Submission to that authority involves desire to please the Lord. God will not open Himself to fellowship with us without our recognition of His rights as the Sovereign God of the universe. Our nature rebels at this. When we rebel against God's authority, we run into problems of fellowship.

if we keep

This phrase indicates the test for fellowship with God – a believer who desires fellowship with the Lord keeps His divine imperatives.

The word "keep" signifies to watch, preserve, guard, watch over. The idea is to give careful attention to something to keep it in the same state. God wants us to pay full attention to the principles of the Word for our lives. Note that the emphasis is on the exercise of the heart and mind ["keep"], not on the execution ["do"].

If we do not keep watch over those principles then we will falter in the Christian life. We must hold the Word of God as if we hold someone in custody – we need to stand guard over it. We make it real in our lives.

Response to the revealed will of God is a sign of intimate fellowship with God. Experiential knowledge is the test of knowing God. Every true believer knows God to some degree but the issue here is knowing God more fully. We actualize God's knowledge by engaging with Him.

The Greek indicates that habitual and continuing fellowship by responding to the Word of God is the issue. A believer in fellowship keeps constant care to respond to God.

Principle: Standing guard over our fellowship with God demonstrates the reality of fellowship with Him.

Application: If we fellowship with God, God will change us. Those who say they fellowship with God but continue in unconfessed sin, just kid themselves.

Some people think that they can continue in willful sin without repercussions. This is a mistake because mercy is no catalyst for sin. God's grace is no excuse for sin. Liberty is no ground for license. James' appeal is that "you may not sin" (2:1).

Rom. 6:1 "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

God does not base the true test of fellowship with Him on a negative: "I do not cheat on my wife. I do not lie." That is like saying, "I do not jump out of an airplane without a parachute." The true test of fellowship is that we apply the principles of the Word of God to our experience because we appreciate God's grace toward us (Ro 6).

We cannot validate ourselves by a negative test but by a positive test. It is possible to not be negative without being positive but we cannot be positive without impacting the negative. If we appropriate God's Word to experience, it will change the negatives of our lives.

Just as we need both a negative and a positive pole in a battery, so we need both positive and negatives modes of operation in the Christian life. If we only have a negative pole then we have no spark. With both we have electricity. If we put in positive response to God's will in our lives then we have restraint from evil. It always begins with positive volition to God's Word.

The child of God delights to do God's will. This is corroborative evidence that he is a child of God. He proves his genuineness as a child of God by his response to the Word. His new desire to do the will of God is not from his natural self but from his new life in Christ. We desire by our natural nature to do our own will, "I did it my way." It also demonstrates willing to fellowship with God.

To obey the Word is simply to live in submission to Scripture. The child of God accepts the Word of God as his infallible rule of faith and practice. If God says it, that settles it. There is no argument from the believer who wants to walk in the light. Whether we like it or not is totally irrelevant

His commandments

The word "commandments" carries the idea of precepts. John uses this word 18 times in this epistle carrying the idea of a whole way of life or principles for life. When we yield to God's commands, we surrender to His authority. These are the marching orders for the child of God. The believer who wants to walk with God has active sympathy with His will.

1 John 3:22 "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. **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. **24** Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

1 John 5:2 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. **3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

Principle: We gain assurance that we are in fellowship with God by the objective evidence of applying God's precepts to experience.

Application: We gain assurance of our fellowship with God when we presently apply the principles of the Word to our experience. Present willingness to apply the Word to experience is the sign of a genuine relationship with the Lord and positive orientation to fellowship with Him. Our priorities when we come to Christ.

We cannot reverse this idea. We cannot establish a relationship with God by keeping His commandments. We establish relationship with God by faith in the finished work of Christ. Neither can we fellowship with God by keeping His commandments. We enter into fellowship with God by faith, by appropriating God's principles of life to experience.

Rom. 1:17 "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Applying God's Word to experience is not legalism because it comes from a heart of love. It has to do with fellowship. Fellowship with God demands a response.

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he

who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

John 15:14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

Spirituality does not come by keeping religious ordinances. Spirituality is not ritual or observance of a set of rules but experiencing fellowship with God. This belief recognizes God's way of life as the highest life. Fellowship with God is most important.

Keeping God's precepts or principles is not legalism but apply God's principles to our experience as a manifestation of fellowship. We do not do what we do out of obligation or out of a sense of compulsion. Spirituality is response to fellowship with God.

John 8:31 "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed...'"

Our way of life corroborates our faith. If we hold dear or treasure the principles of life from the Word of God, then we demonstrate fellowship with God.

The Christian life does not rest on compulsion or obligation but appreciation for God's grace. Gratitude for God's grace brings concord with God's principles. Arbitrary acquiescence to laws of God is religion, not spirituality. The kind of life we choose is a manifestation of our faith. The way we live is the test of our faith.

1 John 2:4

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

John now begins to confront the first of three false claims to spirituality. This set of claims is different from the set of claims in chapter one. The issue here revolves around the idea of present willingness to respond to fellowship with God with positive volition. Present willingness to respond to God is demonstration of present valid fellowship.

He who says,

Just as in 1:6,8,10, John addresses those who make claims to which they do not fulfill. He brands these people "liars" later in this verse. They are all profession but no application.

Usually these are the legalistic types. Legalists of the first century thought they could live up to God's standards by operation bootstraps.

However, in the Christian life, the Holy Spirit executes fellowship with God when He fills us or controls us.

"I know Him,"

This phrase "I know Him" is the pious platitude of the believer who claims fellowship with God but does not respond to God. Pseudo spirituality always makes false contentions about spirituality. They think that they know what spirituality is but they do not. Religion by taboos is not spirituality.

and does not keep His commandments,

It is possible to obey rules and not fellowship with God but keeping His commandments demonstrates the reality of that fellowship.

Principle: Pretension and fellowship with God cannot coexist.

Application: How do we know that we know Him? How do we know whether we are in fellowship with God? There is a test for determining this. That test is whether we have a genuine and continual walk with God.

To "keep His commandments" is to live in submission to Scripture. It is not a matter of doing what the preacher says or what the church says but what the Word of God says.

Obedying Scripture is not legalism but a responding to the known will of God in order to please Him. "If God says it, that settles it." There is no argument from the believer in fellowship. "Whether I like it or not is irrelevant."

God holds us accountable for what we know about Him. He holds us accountable to truth. The more we know the more responsibility we have to translate that knowledge into experience.

is a liar,

If we say that we fellowship with God but do not apply truth to experience, we lie. Our life is a sham of cheap claptrap. God brands us as a

deceiver in this. This indicates the kind of character we carry.

and the truth is not in him

A person who claims truth but not live up to the truth he knows, does not have that truth as the principal power in his life. Chapter one made this kind of statement (1:6,8,10).

The “truth” is in the believer who walks with God on a daily basis. If we truly love God, we seek to please Him. Holiness always aligns itself with the precepts of God’s Word.

We can translate the words “in him” better as “in this one.” We can precisely define the person who does not have the truth as a vital component in his life. God’s will as seen in His precepts is the mainspring of Christian living. This dominates the Christian in fellowship. It constrains him to do God’s will.

Principle: Truth constrains the believer in fellowship.

Application: No matter what our claim, if we do not apply truth to experience, we lie to ourselves.

Often genuine fellowship and phoney fellowship with God are difficult to tell apart. Just as a phoney dollar bill and a genuine dollar bill are sometimes difficult to distinguish. The counterfeit appears genuine but it always falls short of the real thing. There is a lack of true correspondence. Many Christians look like believers in fellowship but they are as phoney as a three-dollar bill.

Many try to fellowship with God by operation bootstraps. It always fails. Galatians 3 explains why. There is something inherent in us that will not allow us to live up to God’s standards. Just as we receive Christ by faith, we must live by faith.

Col. 2:6 “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him...”

The order is important. We do not keep commandments in order to fellowship with God. We keep God’s precepts because we are in fellowship with God. First faith, then fellowship.

John 14:15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments [precepts]... 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be

loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

Obedience validates our love for the Lord. Knowing God is more than possessing right information about Him; it is engaging with His will. Lack of concern for keeping God’s precepts exposes our shallow hypocrisy.

Some people can talk a good game of football but they never played the game at all. They are puff and wind filled with hot air. All they can do is talk. They can tell you how to live the Christian life but they never live it themselves.

Some believers are armchair quarterbacks of the Christian life. Unless we can walk, we had better not talk. We must back up our talk with our walk. Life must match lip, otherwise, we make ourselves out to be a religious liar.

1 John 2:5

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

John now puts forward a counter-claim to verse four.

But whoever keeps His word,

The word “whoever” is an abiding promise to any and every believer who chooses to apply the Word of God to his experience. We can enjoy fellowship with God if we “keep” His Word, that is, God’s own personal Word.

The word “keeps” indicates constancy. Whoever makes a practice of applying truth to experience enters into the reality of fellowship with God. The issue is not feelings or fervor but the point is appropriation of the promises to experience.

“His word” indicates God’s own personal Word. God has an interest in His Word. This is more than particular commandments, it is the sum total of His revelation.

truly

The word “truly” means of a truth, in reality, most certainly. This word is in the emphatic position making the point that God’s interest above all else is the reality of fellowship with Him.

the love of God is perfected in him.

The word “perfected” carries the idea of undivided, whole. When we apply truth to experience, nothing hinders the manifestation of God’s love to us. The constraining influence of God’s love moves us to careful keeping of His Word to begin with and ever moves us toward that end. This is a picture of the Spirit-filled believer.

It is most certain [“truly”] that God completes His love in those who respond to His Word. God’s love resides fully in those who keep His Word. God’s love is undivided in His attitude and actions toward us, thus, His love is complete toward those who apply truth to experience. God makes His love real in him.

The words “in him” indicate that God makes His love real in this kind of believer and no other. “In him” means in this one (and no other). In addition, it does not say “by him” for we are not the authors of this love. In this application of truth produced by love, we know experientially that we are in Him.

By this

The words “by this” refer to the preceding sentence. We know that we walk in God’s love when we appropriate the truth of God’s Word to experience. We cannot have fellowship with God in time without understanding His nature and ways. The woods are filled with people who have no interest in God’s way of life. We cannot fellowship nor love God without understanding and applying His Word to our lives.

we know that we are in Him

When God makes His love real to us, then we know that we are “in Him.”

Principle: We know that we are “in Him” when God makes His love real to us.

Application: Keeping or applying God’s Word to our experience does not mean sinless perfection. We all have times when we disobey God’s Word and succumb to the flesh.

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

The issue is whether we are willing to walk with God on a regular basis. Application of truth to experience perfects God’s love in the believer. The

proof of our love is loyalty. The proof does not lie in sentiment but in submission to the will of God.

We cannot earn or deserve the love of God. It is all of grace. We never deserve God’s love, therefore, we cannot work for it.

1 John 2:6

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Verse 6 is the second of the three false claims of this chapter. The claim of verse 4 was the claim of fellowship with God without appropriation of the principles of His Word.

The claim of this verse is the claim of intimate fellowship with God without living out the principles Jesus applied to His life.

He who says he abides in Him

Now we come to the first of the 24 times the key word “abide” occurs in 1 John. Fourteen of these occurrences refer to the permanent relationship between God and the believer (2:6, 3:24 [2x], 4:12, 4:13 [2x], 4:15 [2x], 4:16 [2x]), Jesus and the believer (2:27, 2:28, 3:6) and both God and Jesus with the believer (2:24). The other 10 instances refer to the Word of God abiding in the believer (2:14, the message (2:24 [2x]), the anointing (2:27) and God’s seed (3:9). Eternal life (3:15) does not reside in unbelievers. The one who does not love resides in death (3:14). The one who resides in love resides in God (4:16).

The word means to stay in place, to remain in a sphere. The believer who claims that he “abides in Him” does not leave the realm where he finds himself. He wants constant fellowship with God. This is a believer with a persistent determination to fellowship with the Lord.

The word “abides” speaks of intimate fellowship rather than a temporary or superficial connection. Abide carries the idea of intimate fellowship or close friendship between God and the believer. The believer in fellowship remains in a lasting condition without many intermissions.

The Spirit-filled believer lives by the life Christ imparts. The believer filled with the Spirit proves it by the practice of walking in fellowship with Him.

Principle: Obedience reveals the nature of our fellowship with God.

Application: When we abide in the Lord, we engage in fellowship with Him. If we walk unrelentingly in fellowship, God will change our lives. This is the sign of fellowship.

John 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

The rub comes when we do not consent to the will of God. We love to devise our own ways for coping with life. However, we do what God wants if we genuinely love Him. If you love your wife, you will do what pleases her.

ought himself also to walk

The word "ought" carries a measure of obligation, a compulsion of love for the Lord. The foundation of this "ought" is fellowship with the Lord. The "ought" is a debt of honor.

The English word "ought" is the contraction of two words: owes it. Squeezing these words together, we get "ought." The standard for the Christian life is not the church nor the pastor but Jesus Himself, the glorious Head of the church.

The word "walk" is equivalent to live. John is challenging us to a new way of life. The word "walk" means to walk around as a way of life.

just as He walked

John challenges us to imitate Jesus. We cannot mimic Him but we can imitate Him. We do not have to move to Israel to imitate Him but we can order our lives by His principles of life.

Jesus kept on walking in continuous fellowship with the Father. He did not walk spasmodically with the Father. Jesus walked in submission to the Father with sensitivity to His will. He walked in

unbroken fellowship and dependence on the Father.

John 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

God expects the closest conformity to Christ in conduct and character. The word "He" refers to His person - "He Himself."

Principle: God is in the business of conforming us into the image of His Son.

Application: There is a duty incumbent upon the person who professes Christ as Savior. If we make the assertion that we fellowship with God then we incur an obligation. We cannot divorce the way we live from the way we walk. Fellowship with God requires standards.

God is in the business of conforming us into the image of His Son. That is why we walk "just as He walked". God fulfills His purpose in us by this. An aim of our redemption is to be like Christ. Jesus is our glorious Example for fellowshiping with God.

1 Peter 2:21 "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps..."

Application of God's principles for life to experience manifests our fellowship with God. Unrelenting dependence on God to work in us will reproduce His values in us. Our obedience reveals our relationship. It makes it abundantly clear to everyone that God delivered us from the bondage of Satan and sin.

2 Peter 1:3 "...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue..."

God gives us all the power and equipment that pertains to life and godliness. The Holy Spirit is the One who reproduces the Lord Jesus in us; that is the Christian life.

2 Cor. 4:10 "...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."

When a person becomes a Christian, God presumes that He owns all the rights of our lives. However, all too frequently we are number one.

God plays second fiddle. God will not play a secondary role in our lives. He must be first. If we intend to have our own way and have others cater to us, then we put ourselves on the pedestal.

Rom. 15:1 "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. **2** Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. **3** For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'"

Our purpose in life is not to please ourselves. We displease ourselves for the glory of God. We inconvenience ourselves for the Lord Jesus and the furtherance of the gospel.

1 John 2:7

"Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning."

Verses 3-11 is the second segment of the second chapter of 1 John. These verses deal with the criteria for fellowship with God in Christ, and being in communion with him. We come to a new test for determining whether we are in fellowship.

Brethren,

"Brethren" is Beloved in some manuscripts. John continues to address genuine believers (2:1). Any person who believes in the finished work of Christ belongs to the family of God no matter which denomination he belongs to. They are "beloved" to God and to other Christians.

I write no new commandment to you,

John's enemies devalued intimate fellowship with God and its implication of loving the family of God.

The word "new" means new in kind, not new in time. John's old commandment was not new in kind or novel. Jesus' "new commandment" to love each other was known to them from the beginning of their Christian experience. This is how others knew that they were Christians (2:9-11).

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this

all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 15:14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

The phrase "as I have loved you" is the key to the love that God expects of believers. It was mighty difficult for Jesus to love the disciples yet He loved them. Jesus loved them with an unadulterated, undiminished love.

Principle: Fellowship with God demands loving the family of God.

Application: The mark of identity among Christians is that they love one another. Walking in the light is more than overt activity. Love is the evidence of walking in the light. Hate is the sign of walking in darkness. We test whether we genuinely walk in fellowship with God by our love.

but an old commandment

The word "but" in the Greek is strong contrast. He places the new commandment and the old commandment in stark contrast. The Greek word "old" means old in time, not old in character. John's command echoes Jesus' command to love the family of God.

which you have had from the beginning.

John confirms the "old commandment" by the idea that they possessed that commandment from the beginning of their Christian lives. That is the commandment of loving other believers.

The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning

We can translate the words "you heard" by used to hear. We say to our son, "Son, be careful that you do not speed." He says, "Yea, sure dad." Thirty minutes later gets a speeding ticket. He heard but he did not hear. God drilled the principle of loving other Christians into our heads from the beginning of our salvation.

The commandment to love is both old and new. John's readers learned love since they became Christians. This commandment is old because Jesus ushered it into the lives of His followers.

Those who love out of Jesus' love produce the light that comes from fellowship with God. There is no cause for stumbling in these people. Hate distorts the light and brings in darkness. Love gives truth to our view of people.

Principle: Intimate fellowship with the Lord depends on loving the family of God.

Application: If we love one another with a biblical love, it means that we are in fellowship with God. It means that we walk in the light as He is in the light (1:5-7). Love springs from and is in conformity with divine love bestowed on us.

Is there someone in your life that you do not love even though you are not attracted to him? Do you love him simply because the Lord says you are to do so? It may be risky and cost you something. You may get nothing in return.

God calls us back to the divine institution of love. He wants us to distinguish between phoney love and true love. We often twist God's love into a caricature of our own making. Christianity goes beyond behavior to unadulterated love.

1 John 2:8

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

Verse 8 expands verse 7. Love in the family of God is the supreme way of demonstrating our fellowship with God.

Again,

John looks at biblical love from another viewpoint than verse seven. Biblical love is not new or novel for his readers possessed it from the beginning of their salvation. However, from another viewpoint, it is new. John takes a second approach to the same subject of verse seven.

a new commandment I write to you,

Christians heard the "old commandment" to love others from the beginning but now it is new in the sense of residing in the inner being of the believer. God's love is old but not obsolete. The example was old but the exhortation is new.

The principle of divine love in the believer is old from the viewpoint of time but, if we look at it in the context of the incarnation, it is new. Jesus

demonstrated it as true. We can see it in believers as well.

Principle: God wants us to love with divine love.

Application: God wants us to love as God loves. The good news of the gospel is that it gives us the capacity to love the unlovely. God gives us an ability to love beyond our natural ability.

Jesus never asked His disciples to do something that He did not do. He told them to love each other as He loved them.

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

Some of us find that loving other Christians is quite a chore. Nevertheless, true believers love as Jesus loved. It is true in Him and in us. We have the same Savior so there is a ground for loving one another. There is an affinity in regeneration.

which thing

The words "which thing" refer to love as the fruit of the Spirit. The person who walks in the Spirit will produce the fruit of love.

is true in Him and in you,

Jesus is the standard for loving. Mankind did not know genuine love until Jesus came. His love carried a new standard. Love took on a new in Christ. His love also became realized in us when we were born again.

There is a conjoining of love in Jesus and in us. What flourished in Him will flourish in us. Love finds realization in Jesus first and in us second. Jesus loved us to the point of dying for us. By selfless, self-giving love, Jesus made possible a new dimension of love in us. It is true in Christ as the originator and Exemplar of love and it is true in believers as recipients, followers and imitators of love.

The words "is true" indicate that Jesus' love in us is not static but dynamic. The present tense indicates the need for constant application of love to our experience. The more we apply love to our experience, the more it is "true" or real. Christian love shines because of our fellowship with Him. We cannot fellowship with Him without His love

corresponding to us. It cannot help but become operative in our lives. Love is real as opposed to reputed in our lives.

Principle: When we acknowledge the truth in Christ, we love conjointly with Him.

Application: Love is realized conjointly between Christ and the believer when the believer acknowledges the truth in Christ. It finds realization first in Christ and then secondly in us. The believer finds corresponding reality of Christ's love in his life.

It is not until God regenerates us that we love more than me, myself and mine. God gives us a new capacity to love when we receive Christ as Savior. We cannot love if we have nothing with which to love. God enables us to love when we fall in love with Jesus. Jesus annihilates difference between people. No one else can do it. The ground is level at the cross.

The only person many of us love is ourselves. That is why we are ornery and mean as a rattle snake. The philosophy is this, "Hurray for me and the devil take the hindmost."

because the darkness is passing away,

Love is a manifestation of living in the light. Darkness passes away in us because of this. Jesus as the light of the world dispels darkness. When we fellowship with Him darkness dissipates in our lives (1:5-7). The present darkness of hatred is passing away.

The "darkness" of spiritual insensibility that hides and obscures the light of divine love is in the process of passing away in believers. The darkness of sin and self-seeking found in natural love is in the process of passing away in divine love.

Eph 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."

Col. 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

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

Note that John does not say that the darkness is already past. Obviously there is still darkness in the believer.

and the true light is already shining

Jesus is the genuine love of the world (John 8:12). When Jesus came into the world, He dispelled darkness in the world. The word "true" means real, genuine. Jesus' true light reveals the true character of a world in darkness. He is genuine light in contrast to the counterfeit or spurious light. The false light of Satan always imitates the true light.

The present tense of "is already shining" indicates that the process already began and is continuing in the lives of Christians. Our true nature is revealed in Christ. When we believe the gospel, light floods into our souls giving us the capacity to love with divine love.

Principle: When we walk in fellowship with the Lord, the Holy Spirit sheds divine love in our hearts.

Application: Jesus coming into the world represents light coming into darkness. The incarnation brought light into the world. The Holy Spirit enables us to walk in the light and manifest God's love.

The life of Christ shared in the believer produces love. It makes it possible to love difficult and disagreeable people, those hard to live with. The Holy Spirit spreads abroad the love of God in our hearts.

Rom. 5:5 "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

There is a genuine light and a false light. Fraudulent, spurious light does not measure up to the "true" light. The true light of biblical love lives up to its claims. It continues to shine forth as a luminary radiating the brightness of love.

The "true light" shining in the believer is divine love as the result of the filling of the Spirit. It is the

fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces divine love in us. When the Holy Spirit controls us, He produces a love that goes beyond our measly love. The more God reveals Himself the more darkness fades in our lives and the more capacity we have to love others.

1 John 2:9

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

Verse 9 connects closely to verse 8. John now gives a concrete example of verse 8. This is the third and final spurious claim to intimate fellowship with God in this chapter (2:4,6).

Hatred of other believers is a sure sign of being out of fellowship with God. John tests the spurious claim by a practical situation.

John picks up another test of character in this verse. The test here is the hate/love test. This is the fifth time John challenges inconsistency between claim and conduct (1:6,8,10; 2:4). There is a sixth in 4:20. Love concludes the three criteria for fellowship with God: “keep,” “walk” and “love.”

He who says he is in the light,

The Gnostics mistakenly took academic knowledge of God for fellowship with God. Genuine knowledge involves correspondent involvement with truth. Genuine “knowledge” [fellowship] involves corresponding action; therefore, anyone who claims to be in the light demonstrates it in some way.

Being “in the light” is equivalent to walking in fellowship with God.

and hates his brother,

The Greek of “hates” conveys habitual hate. It especially carries the idea of malicious and unjustifiable bad thoughts toward others – to detest. It is a sense of animosity without cause.

“His brother” is a reference to a member of the family of God, a Christian.

is in darkness until now

Christians who characteristically hate their brothers are in the darkness of being out of fellowship with God. This is the absence of fellowship with the God of light. God’s love cannot be neutral.

Genuine Christians can hate other Christians. That is why John challenges the believer to radical love. We cannot toy with divine love if we love biblically. A Christian loves self-sacrificially.

We cannot hate our brother and walk in the light simultaneously. There is strong antipathy between God and the believer who hates his fellow Christian because God is pure and absolute light. .

Darkness means in this context to be out of fellowship with God or carnal. We cannot claim to be in the light and hate fellow Christians. We test our fellowship with God by whether we love Christians. There is no gray area between light and darkness when it comes to God for He is absolute in His character. We cannot be in fellowship with God and out of fellowship with a Christian concurrently.

Principle: Fellowship with God depends on loving members of the family of God.

Application: Christians do hate other Christians. When this happens, we step out of fellowship with God. Hate stumbles our walk with God.

Without love for the family of God, there can be no love for God. Hating the members of the family of God is equivalent to walking in darkness. Hate and fellowship with God cannot mix.

We can hate overtly or covertly. Either way, we no longer fellowship with God. Coldness, isolation or exclusion of another Christian hinders our walk with God.

Rom. 13:8 “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law... 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

We cannot claim fellowship with God and make a practice of hating the one we professes to own as our brother. Hate is not “not loving.” Hatred is the absence of divine love produced by the Holy Spirit for fellow Christians.

Apart from walking in the light, all else is phony fellowship. It may be human attraction but it is not divine love. Human attraction has its preferences based on biases that we pick up along the way. We may like some but hate others. Many may be humanly unattractive to us. It is also easy to be attracted to those we are naturally attracted

to. It is not spirituality to be attracted to those whom we are naturally attracted. Attraction to personality or physical appearance is not love.

Can you say, "As far as I know, there is nothing between me and any one else. I am free to love."?

1 John 2:10

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him."

There is no twilight in divine love between love and hate. The contrast is stark and unqualified between human love and divine love.

This verse shows the true claim to fellowship with God.

He who loves his brother

The believer who can love all believers under any circumstance is a believer who walks or abides in the light; that is, he fellowships with God. He fellowships with any Christian anywhere. He may not agree with every Christian but he fellowships with him nevertheless.

abides in the light,

To abide in the light is more than being in the light. The person who loves walks in fellowship with the Lord. The world will sit up and take notice of this kind of love. This person may be shy, introverted or extroverted but he loves his brother without condition. He takes no excursion from loving his brother for he abides in the light.

"Walking" addresses behavior and "abiding" speaks to the proviso that determines behavior.

and there is no cause for stumbling in him

The word "stumbling" means stumbling □ block or trap. The Christian who loves does not cause others to stumble or fall. Christians who love are not obstacles to others. They do not say thoughtless things to others.

Principle: A great obstacle among Christians is lack of love.

Application: Loving members of the family of God involves commitment. Biblical love goes beyond profession of love; it reaches into the act of love. Showing care about the needs of fellow Christians demonstrates love. Love costs something. If we refuse to help a Christian in need

while having the capacity to help them, we do not love them.

Is there any brother whom you do not love? You may say, "Well, I love most of them but there are a few that I don't love." God says we are to love all of them all the time. You may retort, "But some will not let me love them." God says, "Love them anyway."

1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."

Loving other Christians does not mean that we must initial everything they do or say. We are not responsible for that. We are not responsible for how they behave. Our only job is to love them. We do not have to like a Christian to fellowship with him. We do not have to agree with a Christian to fellowship with him. All we owe him is love.

Rom. 13:8 "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

Love is free from jealousy, envy or malice. Love does not run other Christians down or criticize them. If there is one ounce of hatred, hostility or judgment toward another believer, we cannot walk with God in fellowship.

1 John 2:11

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

This verse says that the sin of hatred does three things:

- It puts us in darkness and out of fellowship with God
- It leads to aimless activity and the possibility of a fall
- It causes us to lose spiritual direction (this verse)

But he who hates his brother is in darkness

John puts the phrase "he who hates" in antithesis to "he who loves." This is the thrust of verse 9.

and walks in darkness,

A hater walks in darkness. This is no occasional excursion into darkness but a course of life. He

cannot fellowship with a God characterized by light (1:5). A person who hates lives in antithesis to the God of the Bible. He gives lie to his profession.

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

Principle: Walking in fellowship with the Lord requires direction and power from the Holy Spirit.

Application: The only way we can break out of darkness is to confess our sin (1:9). If we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work in our souls, our spirit will curdle. We will have a sour outlook toward others. Everything will be sour grapes to us. We lose spiritual direction.

God does not call upon us to love others with our own puny love. He provides the power of the Holy Spirit to love others with a caliber beyond our own. We can draw on God's limitless resource to love the not so lovely.

Rom. 5:5 "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Gal. 5:16 "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love..."

If Christians loved with the love of the Spirit, it would make a great impact on those without Christ. They would say, "Those people are different over there. They love one another. They don't gossip or backbite. They do not knife each other in the back."

There are believers all around us who carry broken hearts. They are discouraged and defeated. They have financial problems or domestic problems. They have problems with their boss. They need love in the struggle with all these problems. They need demonstration of divine love.

Many Christians walk out of church and do not ask penetrating questions of other believers. All they contribute to other believers is a glorified "hello" and "goodbye." They have no genuine interest in fellow Christians. If there is any place on earth where we should love one another, it is in

the household of faith. If we cannot find it there, we will not find it at work.

and does not know where he is going,

The word "going" means to move away from a reference point. The believer who harbors hate in his heart will lose his sense of spiritual direction. He wanders aimlessly in the dark in peril of a great fall. Malice causes him to lose his sense of spiritual judgment. He no longer has a spiritual reference point.

because the darkness has blinded his eyes

Unconfessed sin causes loss of intimate fellowship with God (1:5-2:2). Hatred is a symptom of spiritual darkness. Only the Holy Spirit can give him spiritual light when he confesses his sin.

Principle: Hatred prevents spiritual growth.

Application: Hatred thwarts spiritual growth. God wants us to love other believers as He loves them. He wants us to love others the way He loves us. God never shows malice toward us.

If we hate our brother or sister in Christ, a self-chosen sphere of darkness blinds us. It does not merely impair our vision but constitutionally blinds us to fellowship with the Lord. We then stumble all over the place spiritually. Darkness creates its own momentum of vindictiveness and hatred.

Light shines on our path when we walk in fellowship with the Lord. We reflect the light of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. Darkness makes it utterly impossible to enter the sphere of glorifying Christ for we have no orientation to the God of light.

1 John 2:12

"I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His names sake."

Verse 12 begins a new division of 1 John. As we divide the physical family into children, teens and adults, so John sets forth stages of spiritual maturity.

It is one thing to fellowship with God but it is another thing to grow as a Christian. Spirituality is one thing (1 Cor. 3:1) but maturity is another. Addressing the issue of maturity, John speaks of three stages in our spiritual development.

John sets forth six parallel statements emphasizing the assured standing each of the three types of Christian has before God (perfect tense). The Greek present tense emphasizes the present consequences of a past event. God gives His commitment to us at every stage of our spiritual development.

I write to you,

The formula, "I write to you," occurs once in verse 12 and three times in verse 13. In verse 14 John says, "I have written to you," twice.

John writes to assure new believers that they are part of the family of God. Later in verse 13 he writes of the new Christian's early walk with the Father,

"I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father."

There are only two families as far as God is concerned: the children of God and the children of the Devil (John 8:44). The term "little children" means born ones. They are brand new babies in Christ. They are in the family of God but barely. We get into the family of God by birth (John 3:7).

John addresses different ranks of believers in the church: "little children," "young men" and "fathers." "Little children" refers to new converts. "Young men" conveys those in process toward maturity. Finally, "fathers" implies the mature in faith.

These three groups of people do not correspond to physical age or sex. It is possible to advance in years and yet be immature spiritually. A younger person can be mature.

The word "little" may mislead us in the title "little children." This title is just one word in the Greek meaning born ones. It may be a general title for all God's people. This term has nothing to do with age or size. It is a title of relationship. If you have eternal life, you are part of God's family.

Of the nine occurrences of the title "little children," John uses it eight times. Paul uses it once (Ga 4:19). John uses it only once outside 1 John (John 13:33). All other occurrences are in this epistle (2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4,5; 5:21). Another term translated "little children" occurs in 2:13, 18 meaning babes or very young children which is not the same idea at all.

Whenever a person comes to Christ, they are "children" in the family of God. It makes no difference whether they have grown in grace or not. It does not depend on their growth in Christ for they are God's children. Spiritual birth is common to any Christian.

Principle: God's aim for each believer is that he passes through the phases of spiritual development until he grows up in Christ.

Application: Not all Christians are of the same stature and caliber. There are baby believers, teenage believers and full-grown Christians. Children are novices in the Christian life. Novices need to know rudimentary truth such as the nature of God's forgiveness of their sins.

We need to change the diapers of new Christians occasionally because they manifest a pattern of anger, hatred and bitterness (1 Peter 2:1,2; 2 Peter 3:18).

There are three phases to spiritual development: babyhood, teenage and the adult. Spirituality is one thing but maturity is another. It is possible to be spiritual but not mature. It is also possible to be mature but out of fellowship with the Lord.

Spiritual babes are immature believers. These believers walk more out of fellowship than in fellowship with God. They zig then zag. They do not walk on a straight course of spiritual development. The one thing that characterizes their Christian life is instability. They rarely confess their sin. They compartmentalize their sins. They are afraid to face them. They may feel sorry for their sins but they do not genuinely confess them.

Christians who truly confess their sins realize that God fully judged sins in Christ. Judgment of our sins occurred 2000 years ago on the cross. Confession accepts this by faith. It is not our emotion about the sin but our faith in what Christ did about the sin that matters to God. That is why if we judge ourselves, God will not judge us.

The principle of double jeopardy comes into play here. If Jesus died for my sins, I do not have to die for them. I do not have to pay the price for my sins because Jesus already paid the price.

Spirituality is equivalent to the words "know" or "fellowship." Fellowship begins with sins

confessed. There can be nothing between the soul and the Savior if we are to fellowship with Him.

A mature person is someone who applies truth to experience in a maximum way. A person who takes a maximum number of principles from the Word of God and applies them to his experience along the way is mature. Many Christians refuse to grow up spiritually because they do not want to find the principles nor apply them to their lives.

Some believers live in undeveloped childhood. Though they may be Christians for 20 years, they are still babes in Christ because they spend so little time in the Word of God. If they read the Bible at all, it is not to discover how they can change their lives. They do not connect their problems to the principles of the Word.

Because your sins are forgiven you

Forgiveness is a wonderful Christian privilege. The word "forgiven" means to let go, pardon. Literally, it means to send off, to release or to remit. God gives forgiveness always upon the wrongdoer and not the wrongdoing. The wrongdoing cannot be undone but the guilt of the wrongdoing can be undone. Forgiveness, then, means to remove the guilt of the wrongdoing. It is not possible to wipe out an event but it is possible to remove the guilt.

The tense of the words "are forgiven" in the Greek means that God forgave our sins in the past with the results that they stand forgiven forever. That is why we cannot make restitution for our sins. Jesus did all the restitution necessary. We do not have to do anything to receive forgiveness except accept the forgiveness in Christ.

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."

Principle: The Christian stands forgiven forever because of Christ.

Application: The foundation to becoming a Christian is an understanding of the doctrine of forgiveness. It is a release of great moment to know that God laid on Christ the guilt for our sin.

One thing all Christians have in common is forgiveness. It makes no difference what denomination to which they belong for if they embraced the cross, they have forgiveness. God

forgives them completely, freely and eternally.

This is the line of demarcation between those who are Christians and those who are not.

God forgave all our sins in Christ. That is why the gospel is "good news." God's only remedy for sin is the death of Christ for our sins. Jesus obliterated our sins forever. Jesus solved the sin problem by dying on the cross. God will never punish the person for his sins who trusts in Christ.

Acts 5:31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Acts 13:38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 26:18 "...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

Heb. 10:17 "...then He adds, Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

1 John 2:13

"I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father."

John wrote five books of the New Testament: John, the three epistles and Revelation. 1 John is the sequel to the gospel of John. John wrote the gospel to show how to believe on Christ (John 20:31). He wrote 1 John to show Christians how to fellowship with God (1:3,4). He directs 1 John toward different classifications of believers into a threefold division.

1 John is the epistle of assurance. That is why the word "know" occurs 38 times in the epistle.

We now come to the second series of three statements about maturity. The first series stated the minimal spiritual experience for each phase of the Christian life (2:12-13b).

The second series states the highest spiritual experience for each phase (2:13c-14).

- Children know the Father in initial fellowship
- Young men [youths] gain victory over the world system
- Fathers [mature Christians] are in a condition of spiritual maturity

I write to you, fathers,

John writes almost 40 years after Paul visited the readers of 1 John in Ephesus (Acts 18:19). Some were established believers. They knew the Lord in fellowship through long experience.

Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

The words "have known" mean that they knew God with continuing experiential results. They knew more than facts about Him but they personally fellowshiped with Him. There is a difference between knowing about President George W. Bush and knowing him personally.

The perfect tense in the Greek indicates that these mature believers came to a state of maturation in knowing the Lord. They fell in love with the Lord because of their understanding of what He did for them.

The "wicked one" is Satan (2:14; 3:12; 5:18,19). The word "wicked" means pernicious (acts that cause detriment to others). A pernicious person seeks to drag others down with him. This is exactly what Satan did. These believers in the teenage phase of their spiritual life learned how to cope with the corrupting influence around them.

The Gnostics of the first century had a distorted idea of the knowledge of God. John counteracted their false claims about knowing God by putting emphasis on knowing God personally and intimately. True knowledge of God is more than factual; it is personal.

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Principle: The outstanding characteristic of an adult Christian is his spiritual maturity.

Application: One characteristic of a spiritual father is that they reproduce themselves. They lead others to Christ. Have you developed enough

in the Lord that you lead others to Christ? Have you reproduced yourself in the faith even once?

1 Cor. 4:15 "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

God characterizes mature believers as having 1) knowledge of the Word of God, 2) wisdom, 3) faith to apply truth to experience, 4) orientation to the principle of grace and 5) maximum edifice in their Christian experience.

The ultimate aim of the Christian life is to know God fully. Those who arrive at maturity have the highest station in God's eyes.

Phil 3:10 "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death"

I write to you, young men,

Each of the three times John uses "to you" he points out an advantage of the group to whom he writes. All three categories have an advantage, a hallmark of spiritual experience.

Because you have overcome the wicked one.

The word "overcome" means to conquer. It is a victory achieved by exploits. The young men of this verse prevailed over Satan's value system. The perfect tense in the Greek indicates that their victory had abiding results. They knew something about abiding results of victory in spiritual warfare.

2 Cor. 2:14 "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."

Rev. 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

Principle: The outstanding characteristic of a growing Christian is that they have victories over the satanic system.

Application: Victory in youth makes for benefits for the rest of life. A fruitful life comes from fighting many battles and deliverance from many heartaches and regrets.

A teenage Christian is someone who moves beyond childhood spiritually but he has not yet made it to spiritual adulthood. They are neither at the bottom of the spiritual experience nor at the top. Yet, they are Christians on the move. They are going places spiritually. They are making a mark for the Lord.

The outstanding characteristic of adolescent Christians is that they know how to battle in the spiritual war. The Devil will try his utmost to put us in a state of spiritual retardation so that we never get to the place of victory. He will do his diabolical worst to keep Christians at the spiritual babyhood level. Some stay at spiritual childhood all their Christian lives. This is his infernal work. Growing Christians learn how to ignore Satan's propaganda machine.

In order to overcome the infernal work of the Devil we need to know how to meet him on God's terms. We do not overcome the Devil by chance. We must know something about his strategy and how to resist that strategy. Every Christian faces three foes: the world, the flesh and the Devil.

Rev. 3:21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

It is possible to overcome sin. Jesus overcame the Devil by taking recourse in the Word of God. He knew how to draw on the principles of the Word and apply them to His life. He quoted three verses in Matthew 4 and the Devil left Him.

Some Christians have been carnal so long that they blunt their consciences. They no longer have a sense of conviction over their sin. They live in perpetual defeat.

I write to you, little children

The word in the Greek for "little children" here is different from the word in verse twelve. The word here means a small child. The word "little" applies to this word but not to the word in verse twelve. This word also occurs in verse 28. Matthew 2:14 translates this word "young Child."

Matt. 2:14 "When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt"

Luke 18 also uses this term for a small child:

Luke 18:16 "But Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.'"

"Little children" in this verse are immature believers.

Because you have known the Father.

Note the three uses of the word "because". After each "because" John points out an outstanding characteristic of each group. There is an outstanding earmark of a child in the faith, a teen in the faith and an adult in the faith.

This sentence gives us the earmark of a baby Christian. Undeveloped believers to whom John writes knew God personally and initially as their Father; they knew Him more than as God.

Principle: All Christians at the minimum know God personally.

Application: Some Christians stay in spiritual infancy. They catch every childhood disease that comes along. The spiritual infant morality rate is very high in modern Christianity.

Little children spiritually play make believe. They often think that something is spiritual when it is not. They sometimes are self-righteous, priggish or legalistic thinking that this is spirituality. About all they know is salvation but not much more. Quite often, they are confused about salvation itself. They know $2 + 2 = 4$ but they have not moved on to algebra and trigonometry spiritually.

1 John 2:14

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

John reiterates his point without repetition but with variations.

I have written to you, fathers

John makes his appeal to mature leaders based on their fellowship with the Lord. This is one of the reasons he writes the epistle of 1 John, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

The “fathers” came into an enduring experiential knowledge of God from the “beginning.” John adds nothing new about the “fathers.” John did not need to say anything new for they “knew Him.”

Principle: God’s goal for every Christian is to move them to maturity in Christ.

Application: Some people know the Lord but do not live in fellowship with Him. They follow Him at such great distance that no one recognizes that they belong to the Lord. Others come to a point of maturity (not perfection). They have grown up in the Lord. They reproduce themselves.

Some Christians stay in perennial infancy. They never grow in grace. They catch every spiritual disease that comes down the pike. They never develop but remain spiritual pigmies for their entire Christian lives.

2 Peter 3:18 “...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

Once a person becomes a Christian, they become a target of the Devil. The Devil is unscrupulous. He will try to stunt the growth of new Christians. That is why it is important for a new Christian to get into the Word of God quickly.

1 Peter 2:1 “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

New Christians are more vulnerable than at any other time in their Christian lives. After we do our spiritual obstetric work of leading someone to Christ then we do our pediatrician work of helping baby Christians to develop in the things of the Lord. Whenever we hear the sounds of new Christians in the maternity ward, we do not leave them lying alone in their cribs. We move them on toward maturity by helping them to understand how to apply the principles of the Word consistently and persistently to experience.

The primary kind of nourishment that God gives for the soul is the Word of God. Habitual

appropriation of truth to experience brings a person to maturity.

I have written to you, young men,

John appeals to young men based on their energy and strength. The previous verse said that the “young men” “overcame the wicked one.” This verse shows how they did it.

Because you are strong,

These young men developed spiritual strength.

Principle: God makes available to us a strength beyond our natural strength.

Application: God wants us to be as strong spiritually as we are physically. Some of us would land in the hospital if our physical strength were as strong as our spiritual strength. God wants us to be strong in Him.

Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Neh. 8:10 “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Isaiah 40:31 “But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Eph. 1:19 “...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power...”

Eph. 3:16 “...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...”

Eph. 6:10 “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Phil. 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Col. 1:11 "...strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy..."

2 Tim. 2:1 "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2 Tim. 4:17 "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!"

and the word of God abides in you,

The secret of the strength of young men was their knowledge of the Word of God and their ability to apply it to their experience. They did not dissipate and debilitate their lives through sin. On the contrary, these young men disciplined and directed their lives by the allowing the Word to indwell their lives and center their lives in Christ.

Eph. 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

Principle: The basis of victory over sin is the Word of God.

Application: One of the foundations of Christian living is the application of the principles of the Word of God to experience. This is victory in God's economy. This is the way to gain victory over the world system.

Psalm 119:9 "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!"

Some people take cursory glances at the Word occasionally. They do not consistently see its principles so they cannot apply them to their experience.

1:6 "... do not practice the truth. 8 ... and the truth is not in us... 10 ... and His word is not in us."

Christians who develop affinity for the Word of God grow in the things of God. We must hunger, thirst and develop an appetite for what God has to say.

Deut. 6:6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart."

Deut. 11:18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

Psalm 1:2 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night."

Prov. 7:3 "Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart."

Jer. 15:16 "Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts."

Jer. 20:9 "Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name. But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not."

Job 23:12 "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food."

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Col. 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

And you have overcome the wicked one

These young men did not conquer Satan in their own strength but through the power of the Spirit. This happened by allowing the Word of God to abide harmoniously, unhindered in their lives as an ever present source of prevailing power.

Principle: We overcome Satan by the power of the Word.

Application: The Word of God teaches us the strategy and systems of the Devil. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (not into

an angel of darkness). Religion is his system for keeping people in the dark.

2 Cor. 11:14 "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."

We can resist the Devil by faith. When we exercise faith in the Word of God about a situation, we take God at His Word. Only on that basis can we resist him (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8,9). We cannot resist the Devil in the faith unless we fortify ourselves with the Word of God.

Eph. 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."**

Rev. 3:21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. **22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

Rev. 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

When the Devil attacked the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus defended Himself by quoting from the Bible. He said, "It is written." He did not read from a scroll. He quoted the book of Deuteronomy. He memorized Scripture. He had it on the tip of His tongue. He quoted three passages.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Matt. 4:5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you, and, In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."

Matt. 4:7 Jesus said to him, It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."

Matt. 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to Him, All these things I will

give You if You will fall down and worship me.

Matt. 4:10,11 Then Jesus said to him, Away with you, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve." Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

1 John 2:15

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Do not love the world

The word "world" occurs 22 times in this epistle. There are four different words for "world" in the New Testament: 1) earth, 2) the inhabited world, 3) age or generation and 4) an adorned system of values. John uses the fourth here.

The "world" system is an enemy of God (4:4). "Love" here is the love of fondness or devotion. Some Christians love the arrangement of a world apart from God, a seductive system that lures people away from God.

The "world" here is not the earth or the physical globe on which we live. The "world" is the Devil's system of values.

1 John 5:19 "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

James 4:4 "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

The Greek forbids an action already in progress. John's readers were already in the process of loving the world. They were in a system of values, priorities and beliefs that excluded God in their lives.

Principle: A Christian in fellowship with God does not adopt the value system of this world.

Application: Worldliness is not taking pleasure in the natural realm for God wants us to enjoy the spectacular Grand Canyon. He wants us to enjoy sports and the symphony. Taking pleasure in the earth is not wrong but yielding to the values of this world violates our fellowship with God.

God expects us to love the birds and the bees! He wants us to enjoy flowers and the world of nature. We glory in God's handiwork of nature. We love people. Neither does not loving the world mean that we are to become eccentric or odd. It does not mean that we live like a hermit in a cave.

Rejecting worldliness does mean that we do not enter its system of greed and develop an attitude of the survival of the fittest and might makes right.

Secularism tries to ostracize God from the core of its life. All they want is what they can taste, see, feel, hear or touch. They want nothing of a God who has sovereign authority over them. They do not want to take God into account for the values of their lives.

or the things in the world.

John adds a further qualification to worldliness – "the things in the world." These are the material things of the world put at the core of our value system. Some Christians incorporate satanic integral systems of greed into their lives that advance the Devil's evil ends.

Principle: Greed is part of the satanic world system.

Application: Worldliness is buying into the value system of the world, its passions, pleasures, and pursuits. We love the world system for its sin for we think it will satisfy our souls. This is a love of indulgence, the system of indulgence that rejects Christ and the implications of an absolute God on their behavior. It is rebellion against God's values and priorities.

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

God warns us against developing a system of values that orient to Satan's system of values. Satan's system is set in antagonism to God's way

of life. We cannot hold to two opposing systems of values at the same time.

1 John 5:19 "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

Note that God does not present the concept of worldliness by way of practices but by way of principle. However, it is possible to exercise worldly thinking without indulging in practices that the church labels as sin. Worldliness originates in a love system that damages our fellowship with God. It can be anything that dulls our spiritual orientation. It may be a sinful attitude toward someone else.

We do not love the world because we have a new love. All our orientation, future, relationships are now new in Christ.

Love of God must remain foremost in our system of values. We do this when we rely on God's set of values as over against Satan's. If we have a worldly system of values in our thinking, we cannot love God. That is because we cannot distinguish between God's will and Satan's will. If we do not know God's will then we cannot love God. We would not know how to please Him.

If anyone loves the world,

This phrase begins the first of three reasons why we should not love the world. An absolute God cannot fellowship with a Christian who loves the world.

The word "if" indicates [in the Greek] that some Christians will love the world. They do not love God for they love something else.

Principle: Buying into the world's value system puts our Christian life into great peril.

Application: Most Christians who talk about loving God do not actually love Him at all. They are in love with love but not in love with God. They may say, "Oh how I love Jesus. Isn't Jesus wonderful?" but not love Him at all. This nauseates God ad infinitum. All that is, is maudlin sentimentality.

Christians who talk about loving God but do not engage with His provisions and assets do not love Him. We need to know something about God before we can love Him.

People who talk about loving God but do not actually love Him approach love as something casual. It is not enough to sing, "Oh how I love Jesus." We must know why we love the Lord Jesus.

2 Cor. 5:14 "For the love of Christ [Christ's love for us] compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

the love of the Father is not in him

The love of the world and the love of the Father are mutually exclusive. We cannot love both at the same time. There is no median ground between these two. If anyone habitually loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him as a vital constraining force.

This person may love the Father but he no longer enjoys the Father's love in his heart. Preoccupation with the world prevents practical appropriation of God's love to us. God's love as Creator is not in question here but the beneficent love that He bestows on His family. Things of the world crowd out loving manifestations of the Father.

The words "not in him" indicate that God's belief system and values are not in him as a controlling force. He sets himself up as the purpose for what he does.

If we are in love with the world, we will not appreciate the love of the Father. There can be no vacuum in the soul. We always fill it with something - we fill it either with God's system or Satan's system. There is always some ruling principle that governs our lives. God does not allow for any middle ground.

Principle: Preoccupation with the world prevents practical appropriation of God's will in our lives.

Application: The Christian marches to a different drumbeat than the world. We live for different values. Loving the Lord Jesus should spoil us for the world system. Satan has his servants, ambassadors and representatives. His kingdom is highly organized. However, Christians in fellowship march to a different drumbeat. We live for a different set of values.

Demas loved this present world. He did not merely toy with it; he loved it.

2 Tim. 4:10 "...for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world..."

Love is an attitude biblically. It is not Pollyanna. Neither is love romance or gushing over someone. These may be manifestations of love but they are not love in itself. Love is a value that we place on someone or some thing. It is something we believe and not an emotional activity. It is what we value. What we value determines whether we are worldly or not.

Rom. 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Satan has a singularity of plan and a deliberate purpose in the world. He operates with guerrilla warfare. It is difficult to find clear lines of battle because he is so subtle in his systems. Nevertheless, he has a system and a plan behind it all.

John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."

John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."

John 16:11 "...of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

Every believer has three foes: an external foe, an internal foe and an infernal foe. The world is our external foe. The flesh is our internal foe and the Devil is our infernal foe. God has a different strategy to fight each foe. It is possible to trust God to handle the flesh and the Devil but not the world. The believer must take on the entire evil triumvirate. This system is a sworn antagonism against God. Imbibing the world system will keep us from amounting anything for God. It will lead us into spiritual bankruptcy.

1 John 2:16

“For all that is in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.”

The word “for” means because. There is a principle of equilibrium that says nothing rises from above its source. Satan binds the things of the world around his system. The whole thing is incompatible with love for God (2:15).

all that is in the world

We can condense the world system to a three-fold appeal:

- Lust of the flesh
- Lust of the eyes
- Pride of life

These are the three infernal foes of the Christian life. The lust of the flesh is the craving to do something contrary to God’s will. The lust of the eyes is the desire to possess something apart from God’s will. The pride of life is the desire to be something contrary to God’s will. This is an attack on the body, soul and spirit of the believer.

Principle: Three infernal foes attack the believer to deflect him from fellowship with God.

Application: All that is in the world is finite. When we make things our idols, we confine our values to the temporal and that which passes away. When we focus on the finite, we develop a new worship system, worship of the finite and things that pass away.

James 4:4 “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

the lust

The word “lust” denotes strong desire of any kind, a yearning or longing. The New Testament mostly uses “lust” in the bad sense. The idea is to crave or long after something evil with a sense of urgency, a passionate desire for satisfaction. It wishes for some illicit thing on which we set our heart. It is inordinate longing of any kind pertaining to such sensuality as greed, sexual lust and the like. It makes pleasure to be an idol.

Rom. 6:12 “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.”

Eph. 2:3 “...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Col. 3:5 “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

1 Thess. 4:5 “...not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God...”

1 Tim. 6:9 “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”

2 Tim. 2:22 “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

Principle: The believer needs the power of the Holy Spirit to help him counteract his enemy within – his sin capacity.

Application: We can tell the difference between a saved person and a lost person by finding out whether they have two natures or just one. The Christian has two natures. We receive these two natures at two different births. We receive fallen “flesh” at our first birth, our physical birth. We receive a divine nature at our second birth, our spiritual birth (John 3:3,7). We cannot eradicate either nature once we have them.

The “lust of the flesh” is the cravings and ambitions of the sin capacity. All the non-Christian has is sight, feel, smell, hearing and seeing. He has no capacity to live for God. He may produce a morality from the flesh but he cannot walk with God. He cannot ascertain the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). No amount of religious perfume squirted on him will make a difference. He will always be flesh and nothing more than flesh.

The Christian has a capacity to live for self or live for God. The flesh or the old nature cannot improve. It is eternally depraved. That is why we must be born again to receive capacity to fellowship with God. When a person receives

Christ, he does not lose his fallen nature but receives a new nature.

The sin capacity in the believer is just as foul as a non-believer's fallen nature. We can never refine it, convert it or save it. However, God implants a new nature in the believer at the point of salvation. We never lose the new nature. As we cannot decide to become a dog or cat, we can never decide to lose who we are in Christ.

Once we become Christians, a titanic tug of war begins to take place within the Christian. A new struggle for the sovereignty of our soul begins to take place. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to win that war.

Gal. 5:16 "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

The flesh and our new nature attempt to checkmate each other. There is a constant struggle between the two. Education and literacy will not deliver us from the power of the flesh. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

of the flesh,

The "flesh" refers to illegitimate appetites produced by our sin factory – our sin capacity. It represents rebellion against God (Ro 7:15,25; Ga 5:19,21). The "flesh" is usually something other than the body. It is more than that. It is the sinful nature, the sinful tendencies of humanity, the fallen condition of man, which is present in the body.

The word "of" indicates that this is not a desire for the flesh but a desire of the flesh. It is a desire that springs from the flesh. There is an inclination to follow evil found in our flesh.

Principle: Our sin capacity is the factory that produces all evil in our lives.

Application: The flesh of the Christian is just as depraved as the non-Christian. A Christian has the same sinful potential as the non-Christian. If we let our sin capacity loose, we can commit murder and adultery just like David did. "Moment by moment we are kept in His love."

Rom. 7:18 "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find."

Rom. 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

Phil. 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh..."

Once we come to realize that the sin capacity within does not improve, we will treat it with caution. It could unleash a pattern of sin at any time.

Bodily appetites in themselves are good. There is a legitimate satisfaction of our bodies but there is also an illegitimate satisfaction. That sinful system of satisfaction and desire comes from sinful motives and from the sinful method of seeking satisfaction in self. When we seek to substitute the lust of the flesh to satisfy our souls then we violate the principle of finding satisfaction in God.

There are many lusts of the flesh in the church world today. For example, there is approbation lust. Some Christians live for praise. This is what stimulates and motivates them. It is worse than drug addiction. Their philosophy is this, "If someone praises me, I am good. Maybe I am better than most."

Some people give money for human recognition. They want their church to think well of them. They may give for a very worthy cause but if recognition is at the heart of it, it is worldliness. "Oh, I get my name on a bronze plaque for giving more than others." The purpose of this kind of life is human recognition.

It is one thing to show appreciation for service but it is another thing to stroke pride in people.

Appealing to the approbation lust of people to serve the Lord is no justification for service. If we approach Christianity this way, people will work their hearts out to gain recognition but they will not please the Lord.

Another form of lust is power lust. Many seek leadership in Christian organizations for power. They cannot obtain power at work so they seek it at church. Now they are a big fish in a small pond. They have their little domain. They know nothing

of genuine biblical leadership. Biblical leadership does not revolve around ego needs for power. They are now a "great believer" recognized by many as a super-saint. They just kid themselves and their church deludes itself if they think this is spirituality. It is carnality. It is worldliness.

the lust of the eyes,

Satan uses the avenue of the eye to incite us toward illicit things. This usually takes the form of excessive materialism. This is the idolatry of possessions. It is not the actual consumption of sin but the contemplation of it that is in view.

Principle: The lust of the eyes is the idolatry of deliberate lust for what others have.

Application: Some believers operate on the philosophy of materialism lust. They define themselves by their status symbols. They do not do service as unto the Lord but for status. Somewhere along the line they get their feelings hurt in church, "No one spoke to me at church today. No one recognized me. This is an unfriendly church." The church is not a lonely-hearts club. The issue that should dominate the local church is the glory of Christ. It is not primarily a social institution.

The lust of the eyes is insatiability stimulated by what we see. Some seek to satiate themselves in pornography. These are people captivated by outward stimulus. Eve looked at the banned tree as a "delight to the eyes." David lusted after the beauty of Bathsheba (2 Sa 11:2). All of this is lust separated from love.

Many Christians are very sly about their sins. They would never commit overt adultery but they commit adultery in their minds. They would never think of murdering anyone but they commit murder in their hearts. Some Christians are full of envy and sour grapes. What goes in my eyes affects my attitude and outlook on life.

2 Sam. 11:2 "Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold."

Matt. 5:27 "'You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 'But I say to you that whoever looks at a

woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 'If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.'"

Plucking our eye out is metaphorical, not literal. Jesus did not mean to physically pluck out our eye if we commit the sin of lust. The idea is that we are to deal radically with lust. We cannot give it any room or it will violate us. God expects us to deal with mental adultery in a very radical way.

Do you allow your eyes to fall on any and everything? Carnal Christians do not discipline their eyes under the power of the Holy Spirit. Some things enflame our passions and if we do not check those passions, we will have a great fall.

The eye is equivalent to that which pleases the self. God sets limits on what we see. The eye of the flesh wants to see more and more. It is never satisfied. That is why we want to "keep up with the Joneses". We want things that we do not need to buy things with money we do not have in order to impress people that we do not like!

and the pride of life

The word "pride" conveys the idea of someone making more of himself than the facts truly justify. He promises more than he can perform. The idea conveys both pride and pretension. Greek literature used this term of politicians, orators and philosophers. The Greek also uses "pride" for a vagabond, hence, an impostor or quack. This person puts on an arrogant display and vaunts himself above others yet he has nothing to back it up.

James 4:16 "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."

Pride involves both boastfulness and self-sufficiency. It is a willful independence from God, "I have enough resources in myself. I don't need God". This attributes to self a false grandeur. Pomp and circumstance are not always real. Pride is more interested in applause than in truth. To seek after the admiration of men preempts seeking after the approval of God.

2 Tim. 2:15 "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need

to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Principle: The pride of life is the sin of egoism, an idolatry of self-centered power.

Application: The pride of life is the sin of egoism, the idolatry of power. Status symbols are more important than genuine representation of self.

This person seeks to define himself by his possessions, "I have a PhD (so I am smarter than other people)"; "My church is larger than the next pastor so I am a better pastor than he is"; "My car is larger than my neighbors so I am more successful than he is".

We commit the sin of "pride of life" when we brag about something aside from its intrinsic good.

This is ostentatious pride or vainglorious pride. This celebrates the means rather than the end. We concern ourselves with superficial benefits rather than the spiritual blessing. For example, "Clothes make the man."

Pride is the proclivity to be captivated by the outward appearance of things, without appreciating God's fundamental principle behind it.

Many believers live their spiritual lives in proud pretension. It is quite an irony to be proud of our spirituality! This is the bogus assumption of spirituality but in reality, it is a farce. It is make-believe spirituality. Boasting about social status and public image is an illusion. The deadliest pride is spiritual pride.

Reputation never replaces character in God's system of values. Some people care more about their reputations than glorifying God. When we define ourselves in terms of our annual income or the size of our house or car, then we care more about reputation than character. We also misrepresent the truth of who we truly are. We show ourselves to be pompous fools with fatuous pride. Success does not measure the man in God's economy.

Dan. 4:30 "The king spoke, saying, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?'"

When we lose our sense of dependence on God, we develop supercilious superiority over others.

We measure ourselves against other people rather than against God's standards.

1 Cor. 4:7 "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

When our ego is the basis of our motivation, then we cannot walk in fellowship with the Lord.

When ego rises to the fore then someone can hurt us, "He doesn't appreciate me. Doesn't he understand that I sacrifice a lot for this ministry?" Ego ultimately produces self-pity. We feel sorry for ourselves if people do not appreciate us as we think they should.

Pride of life orients around ego. We want to outdo or out rank others. This is pride of race, pride of face and pride of grace. Those of us who exercise pompous pride have very little to be proud about. Pride attempts to gain the adulation or envy of other people. Instead of engendering envy, it often creates rivalry and jealousy in others.

Gal. 5:26 "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Phil. 2:3 "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

is not of the Father but is of the world

Satan conceived the system of lust so lust and pride are not of God. God did not ordain lust patterns and pride. It is something that intrudes itself into our lives. Satan's system will usurp God's system if we allow it.

There is an interaction between the Devil's world system and our flesh. They play on one another for there is an affinity between them. They form a team against God and God's standards.

The three values of worldliness do not find their origin in God but in the finite system of Satan. Since the things of the world do not derive from God, they bear no resemblance to Him. They have no affinity with Him.

Principle: Satan's worldly system attempts to usurp God's purpose for living.

Application: God gives a threefold strategy to fight against the world, the flesh and the devil. Against the world of lust and pride, He commands us to “flee.”

1 Tim. 6:11 “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”

2 Tim. 2:22 “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

His command to deal with the “flesh” is to deny or not yield to it.

Rom. 6:12 “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

His command against the Devil is to “resist” him by submitting to God.

1 Peter 5:9 “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

Love of the Father and love of the world cannot co-exist together. This is an either/or proposition. If our love for God prevails in our orientation to life, we walk in fellowship with the Lord. Why do we do what we do? Do we do it as unto the Lord or do we do it as unto people? Why do we serve in the local church? We should serve because of God’s provisions for us, because of grace, because Jesus died for us. We serve because of what God has done, not because of what we do.

Matt. 6:24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The church is supposed to be in the world but the world is not supposed to be in the church. A ship is supposed to be in the sea but the sea is not supposed to be in the ship. If the world is in the Christian, the Christian will sink in his spiritual

life. We cannot love the Lord and love the world at the same time.

1 John 2:17

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

The third reason for not loving the world is that it is in the process of passing away:

1. We cannot love God and the world simultaneously (2:15)
2. The system of values in the world are contrary to God’s values (2:16)
3. The world’s values are transitory (2:17)

And the world is passing away,

The Greek conveys the idea that the world is in the process of passing away. It has not passed away yet but it is on the way. The world is a temporary system. There are more lasting values than that of the world.

Principle: By its very nature, a sinful worldview is self-destructive.

Application: The world is a temporary system. God’s values endure into eternity. Why commit ourselves to something that will pass away? We need to keep eternal values in view because the process of dissolution of this world’s values is going on at the present.

There is nothing permanent about the values of this world for they move with prevailing opinion. They shift with the tide of public opinion. There are no absolutes in this world. Lusts feed on fleeting things. If we anchor ourselves to something temporal, we will never know how to live with absolutes and for an absolute God.

God has designed the world’s system to end. It is already in the process of disintegration by accomplishing its own dissolution. All the lust generated and incited likewise will eventually gut true values. The glittering treasures of yesterday will curve into faded antiquities and oddities of a future day.

This world is fundamentally transient in character. All the evils that characterize this world will one day be gone. Trust in the things of this world will

ultimately let us down for it is in the process of perishing.

Some say, "There will always be an England." Others say, "The United States will always be here." It will come as a shock to some that the world and its system of values will pass away. The United States will not be the dominant power in the world forever. It will not exist forever.

If we trust ourselves to the temporal, we cannot come to know eternal things. Fleeting lusts point us nowhere. The treasures of time will pass away. There is a hell on earth for Christians who live for themselves.

We deceive ourselves with the so-called permanence of things. There is no stability in a bank account. We need to ascertain the irrelevance of temporal, passing things and the permanent relevance of eternal things.

Matt. 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

and the lust of it;

The lusts that we enjoy in time will not last forever. There is something more eternal and more satisfying than living a life of lust. We need to fix ourselves on eternal things.

Principle: A life of lust by its very nature is self-destructive.

Application: A life of lust is by its very nature self-destructive for it bears the seeds of its own destruction. The attitudes and practices of worldliness are the very things that destroy themselves. That is why they are transient and do not last. They are without ultimate value because they root themselves in time.

The person who dies with the most toys does not win! Living for fame and things will not last like living for reaching those without Christ and building believers. God wants us to put priority on the things of greatest value.

Jim Elliot, the missionary martyred by the very people he was trying to reach with the gospel, said this, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Col. 3:2 "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth".

but

The following statement is a complete reversal to the preceding statement. The contrast is between those who put priority on temporal things verses eternal things.

he who does the will of God

Instead of doing the will of the world that is passing away, the one who habitually does the will of God will enjoy eternal things. Rather than expending love on the world, the believer in fellowship loves the Lord and His will.

John puts the "will of God" in contrast to our lust patterns and proud pretensions. The will of God is eternal in contrast to our will and our dreams. The one is material and temporal and the other is eternal and permanent. The will of God is the best thing we can do with our lives.

1 Peter 4:2 "...that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. **3** For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries."

The will of God is the true purpose for the life of the believer. Everything worthwhile revolves around the pivot of God's will. It should be the normal activity of the Christian.

Obedience to the will of God acknowledges the necessity of the spiritual dimension to the believer's life. It is in doing the will of God that the believer demonstrates spirituality to others.

Principle: God's will for our lives is the most important standard for Christian living.

Application: There is a vast difference between knowing the will of God and doing the will of God. However, we could not do the will of God if we did not know the will of God but knowing is not the same as doing it.

If we want to advance in a new place of employment, we must get a clear picture of the company's vision for the future. We engage in responsibilities that will advance that vision. Similarly, when we become Christians, we find out God's will for our lives and do it. We cannot afford to displease our Employer. He laid out His vision in book we call the Bible so that we can

ascertain His will. How can we do what we do not understand?

Eph. 5:17 "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

We must be willing to do God's will with no strings attached. We cannot dicker with God nor quibble with Him about His will. We accept His will as absolute, sight unseen. "I will do His will whatever the cost. God helping me, I will do whatever it takes."

John 7:17 "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."

We cannot bargain with God's will. We have no basis for doing that. We cannot debate with God about His will. No, we come to the place where we accept His will with no strings attached. You may say, "I think I would like a one month free trial. If I like God's will, I will buy into it. I will own it if I approve of it." No, we cannot come to the will of God that way. We come to it with no qualifications.

God desires that we fill our minds with His will. It is one thing to know a little of the will of God but it is another thing to know His will fully. If we know His will wholly, then we can set our sail accordingly. God will sweep us along in His plan and program. That gives God great delight and it will give us delight.

Col. 1:9 "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding..."

We prove the will of God in our lives by yielding our bodies to do what He wants. It is possible to "prove" the will of God. We prove the will of God just as we prove the answer to a problem in algebra. We can prove God's will so that we know for sure that we are in God's will.

Rom. 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Jesus did the will of God in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). He prayed that prayer in the greatest crisis of His life. Can you accept the will of God when your baby is dying or when you are about to undergo surgery? There is something more important than our personal welfare – the will of God.

Do you have to be in control of everything in your life? Do you have to be at the steering wheel of your life?

1 Peter 4:2 "...that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."

abides forever

All Christians will live forever so John is not talking about eternal life when he uses the phrase "abides forever." His point is that those who walk in fellowship with God enjoy doing something that will last forever. We want to be an asset, not a liability, to the cause of Christ in time for when we do that, it will last forever.

The word "abides" connotes the idea of permanence. The will of God is the one principle of permanence on which the believer can fasten himself. He does not attach himself to something temporal when he does the will of God but to something enduring. He lives for eternal purposes when he does the will of God. There is a lot of mutation in this world but there is no mutation when we live for God.

Principle: The person who lives in the will of God lives for immutable values.

Application: The right kind of love leads to a life of permanent values. Living for eternal values pays eternal dividends. Why not invest in eternal things?

All things are transient, but he who does the will of God builds on eternal foundations. There is no "passing away" for what that believer does.

Christianity cannot accommodate to the world because it revolves around an absolute God of permanent values. God cannot change; He is

immutable. Man is mutable, therefore, man must orient to the will of God. God will never adapt to our will.

Christians cannot accommodate their faith to the prevailing opinions and practices of men because he lives for an immutable God and His immutable values. We live above the fray doing the will of God. This world is not our home. We are pilgrims passing through. That is why we do not adjust our standards to the world. We walk like speckled birds against the crowd of accommodation.

2 Cor. 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

1 John 2:18

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

John now begins to warn against another foe – the coming Antichrist. There are enemies to fellowship that John's readers need to alert themselves. These adversaries of Christ will especially put believers off track. Thus, verses 2:18-28 show that there are enemies to fellowship with God. Many people will attack temporal fellowship with God. They have their own pseudo-systems of spirituality.

In the first part of this chapter, John applies a character test; now he applies a doctrinal test to indicate the genuineness of his reader's spirituality.

John has been dealing with the idea of light. God is light and Christians need to walk in the light. In this verse, John deals with the problem of counterfeits to light.

Little children,

The words "little children" here mean a small child. John's readers stand in need of a very steep learning curve. They are babes in the midst of

raving spiritual wolves. They need the mature warnings of the apostle John. They needed to grow up spiritually.

1 Cor. 3:1 "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ."

Principle: New Christians are more vulnerable to spiritual attack than mature Christians.

Application: A new convert is a babe in Christ. He does not have very much light. All he has is life and not much light. We do not expect a baby to know much. Just as long as the baby is normal, you do not worry about him getting light for we will educate and train him. If he feeds properly, and all other things are equal, in due process of time, he will grow up.

When a baby does not grow or develop, then you have parents with a real heartache. Whenever you find a person who has been born again but has not grown, has not developed, does not progress, something is radically wrong. This is a case of arrested spiritual development. We have a case of spiritual retardation on our hands. Churches today are filled with people like this. They are saved as much as anyone else but they have not developed spiritually.

it is the last hour;

The term "last hour" indicates a climatic period. There is no definite article in the Greek, indicating that this is not the end of the church age when the Antichrist will come. Rather, the idea here describes the general character of the period and not the chronological period.

John uses the word "hour" for a time of doctrinal crisis during the church age.

and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming,

The "Antichrist" is someone who is against Christ. He also comes instead of Christ. John is the only New Testament author who uses this term (4:3; 2 John 7). This person is the coming world religious autocrat energized by the Devil himself who seeks to replace the Messiah (Da 8:9-11; 11:31-38; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Re 13:1-5; 19:20; 20:10).

The words "is coming" indicate logical progression. The words "is coming" in the Greek assume the future coming of the Antichrist is

certain as the present reality. The Antichrist already disguises himself as Christ.

even now many antichrists have come,

At the time of writing 1 John, Christianity was not yet 60 years old yet “many antichrists” had already come. There were already many false teachers spread throughout the Roman Empire teaching things contrary to the Word.

Not only will a world religious autocrat arise in the end times but he will have many emissaries [demonic false teachers] spread around the world as well. Down through church history many antichrists have arisen.

The words “have come” indicate that antichrists exerted their influence in the church of John’s day. They were vendors of the error of a certain kind of spirituality. John openly labels them as antichrists.

The “many antichrists” are a force with which we are to reckon because of the multitudinous array they assemble. They have many activities.

by which we know that it is the last hour

The “last hour” is a time of the church’s seduction into false teaching.

Principle: Satan, his Antichrist and emissaries will attack our spirituality and maturity.

Application: Christians constantly need warnings about conflict between truth and error. It is not enough for the believer to walk in light or walk in love; he must also walk in the truth. The issue is truth or consequences!

Some people say, “It makes no difference what you believe, just so long as you are sincere!” Is sincerity the magic ingredient that makes something true? If so, then you ought to be able to apply it to any area of life, and not only to Christianity.

In this case, a doctor in a hospital could sincerely give the wrong medicine to a patient but the patient becomes violently ill and dies. The doctor was sincere but the medicine was wrong.

It takes more than sincerity to make something true. Faith in a lie will always result in serious consequences. We must never misplace our faith in the truth. It does make a difference what we believe! If a man wants to drive from New York to Toronto, no amount of sincerity will get him there

if the highway is taking him to Florida. A person who is genuine builds his life on the truth of the Word, not superstition or lies. It is impossible to live a genuine spiritual life by believing lies.

Can you recognize false teaching when you hear it? Can you distinguish between sincerity and truth? Wishing something true does not make it true. Faith in a lie causes serious consequences.

Christians now live in the last days of spiritual counterfeit.

1 Tim. 4: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...”

2 Tim. 3:1 “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come...”

Christians of our day need to know how to contradict, nullify and neutralize false teachers. The Christian church today is exceedingly vulnerable to false teaching because it knows so little of the Word of God.

1 John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

2 John 7 “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

1 John 2:19

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”

This verse speaks to the issue of the antichrists of verse 18. They formally connected to the church but were never a part of the genuine body of Christ.

They

The “they” refers to the antichrists of verse eighteen. These antichrists were not apparent to the church when they originally resided among the assembly of believers.

went out from us,

Note the “from us,” “of us,” “with us” and “of us” phrases. There is a striking play on phrases in this verse. There is a clear contrast between genuine and false professions of faith.

The antichrists at one point identified themselves formally with the church but they left the assembly of believers associated with John. They did not share the same spiritual life so they departed the fellowship. They left because they held to a divergent view of the person and work of Christ. They were not genuine believers.

Note that the antichrists left of their own will. The church did not expel or excommunicate them. They left because they were of fundamental different belief than the church. They did not believe in the deity and finished work of Christ on the cross.

The phonies went out physically because they were fakers doctrinally. They eventually gravitated to their own crowd and to their own beliefs.

Principle: Fakers eventually gravitate to their fundamental beliefs.

Application: False teachers spring from within the formal church. Deceit coming from within the church is more dangerous than deceit coming from without. There is a level of trust among people you know.

It is difficult to distinguish the wheat from the tares at times because the tares grow among the wheat. A counterfeit dollar bill is more difficult to detect than a three-dollar bill.

Most cults and sects come from within the church. Jesus and the apostles predicted this. These people hide and obscure what they truly believe.

Some go out from the assembly of believers because they were not of us in the first place. Their departure from genuine Bible believing Christians demonstrated the unreality of their faith. Their withdrawal proved that they were not genuine.

They were physically within the circle of genuine believers but they were not true believers.

Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

but they were not of us;

The fakers [antichrists of verse 18] that left the true assembly where not genuine believers. The word “but” is strong contrast. The issue is “us” verses “them.” Genuine Christians cannot tolerate false teachers in their midst.

for if they had been of us,

The word “of” speaks of identity and origin. Although the antichrists formally identified with the church, they never truly coupled to Christ.

they would have continued with us;

If they had been genuine, they would have continued with the authentic assembly of believers. Perseverance is an indication of genuineness.

The idea of “continued” is perseverance. Continuity is an indication of reality. The disassociation of the antichrists with genuine believers proved their fabrication.

The word “with” speaks of mutual, personal fellowship.

Principle: Continuance is a proof of conversion.

Application: Continuance is a proof of conversion. Time will tell if a profession proves true. It is difficult to see within a person’s heart. Sometimes we say when a person makes a decision for Christ that, “They made a profession of faith.” “They professed salvation.” “We will wait to see if their profession is real nor not.” The gospel does not take with some people. They do not come to grips with the reality of Christ and His grace.

Defection from truth is evidence of what one truly believes. Behavior confirms belief. Departure from truth unmask assumptions about truth. Those who truly believe in the authenticity of Christ remain loyal to it. They do not break away.

To go on is proof that you have come in. Continuance makes it abundantly clear that you are the genuine thing. It is clear that those who drift away from authentic Christianity never came to own the truth of the gospel in the first place.

Matt. 13:38 "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels."

but they went out that they might be made manifest,

The phrase "that they might be made manifest" shows God's purpose in the fakers leaving the assembly of believers. God wants to draw a very clear line between truth and error. Their departure makes it very clear that they did not belong to the church. By leaving, they will not mislead genuine believers. Their departure unmasked the truth of who they were in plain fashion. Error ultimately reveals itself.

that

The word "that" introduces a purpose clause. We now see God's purpose in their leaving - to safeguard genuine believers against the deception of false religion. God's purpose is to reveal false doctrine.

none of them were of us

John does not teach here that Christians cannot fall away. The issue here is the capacity to distinguish between genuine and false believers. Remaining in a congregation does not necessarily infer that a person is a genuine Christian but it does indicate the possibility that he is a Christian. The indication of whether a person is a genuine believer is not the recitation of a creed or holding to a formal membership but a true embracing the essential truths of Christianity.

Principle: Some people use religion to deceive others.

Application: A mark of heresy is lack of perseverance in the things of God and with the people of God. The mark of a genuine believer is that he loves genuine believers.

1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the

brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."

2 Pet. 2:21 "For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'"

We need to learn the truth that not everyone who speaks from the pulpit is a genuine believer. The hard reality is that there are apostates and fakers in the church. If we do not alert ourselves to this truth then we make ourselves vulnerable to deception.

New converts are especially susceptible to being misled by false religion. There is a difference between the true and the false and between the saved and the lost. There are all kinds of people within the structural church.

Even the apostles did not recognize a phony in their midst. He was one of the original twelve apostles. Judas fooled them all except Jesus. He wormed his way into the group but he was not truly a part of them spiritually. That is why he betrayed Christ.

1 John 2:20

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

John now turns to the heretical claims of his opponents. They claimed superior knowledge because they had received an exclusive knowledge (gnosis).

But you

The word "you" is emphatic. The idea is "You in contrast to the Gnostics."

have an anointing

The anointing refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell each believer (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Ro. 8:9; 1 Co. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:21-22). The Greek indicates that we "keep on having" the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He permanently indwells the believer.

from the Holy One,

Verses 18 and 19 warned Christians of false religion. Now John affirms that believers have protection against deception. They have the Holy Spirit to guard them against error. He is a safeguard for our soul. Jesus as the "Holy One" imparts the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Christ.

False religion made claims about God. False teachers viewed themselves as possessing superior knowledge of the Gnostics. The Holy Spirit judges this teaching by the spirit of truth. He is the detector of error. He illumines each genuine Christian about truth.

Principle: The Holy Spirit illumines us as to what is true.

Application: The Holy Spirit comes initially to dwell in every believer at the moment of salvation. God never repeats this anointing. God also inducts each believer into the priesthood at the point of salvation just once.

The purpose of the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the believer is that the Holy Spirit is at constant service to the Christian. The Holy Spirit performs all His work on the believer from the moment of His indwelling. One of these functions is the illumination to understand divine revelation.

Unadulterated knowledge of God's Word without the enabling power to understand it is a futile exercise. Along with the factual knowledge of the objective Word of God, we need spiritual understanding. We need the Holy Spirit to receive, comprehend and appropriate divine truth.

and you know all things.

The Holy Spirit guides the believer to know divine revelation (John 14:26; 16:13). Christians have a built-in lie detector to preserve and understand the truth. God gives to each believer the faculty to know divine truth. That is why the believers to whom John wrote fell for a false system of spirituality.

Principle: God gives every believer the faculty to understand what he needs to know spiritually.

Application: The believer without the illumination of the Holy Spirit cannot understand divine truth. This is the only way for us to know

truth beyond our physical world. This is the safeguard to the soul. The Holy Spirit detects error.

1 Cor. 2:3-

The illumination of the Holy Spirit enables us to understand and apply the Word of God to our experience. That is why we know "all things." This is the comprehension of spiritual truth when God confronts us with it. The Holy Spirit personally orients the believer's mind to the Word of God.

1 Thess. 4:9 "But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another..."

1 John 2:21

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

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth,

The purpose of John's writing was not to inform his readers of something new, but to bring his readers to the point of applying truth they already know to experience.

but because you know it,

John's readers knew the truth yet they allowed false teachers to sway their view of Christ. They knew that they had the indwelling Holy Spirit to protect them from error (2:20) but did not allow their "anointing" to stop the infiltration of false doctrine. They are far more culpable than non-Christians because of satanic blindness. They needed to apply what they knew.

2 Peter 1:12 "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth."

and that no lie is of the truth

The "lie" in this context is the teaching of the antichrists (2:18). These false teachers undermined the person and work of Christ. They denied that Jesus was the Messiah (2:22).

The "truth" is biblical revelation. God's revelation is always consistent with the One who gave it.

God can never contradict Himself. God is truth so by His very nature, He cannot lie.

The word "of" means source. No lie has its source in the truth because truth and lie are radically irreconcilable. There is no neutral ground between truth and a lie. Truth can be nothing but truth. It is always absolute.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

Principle: Truth and error always stand in antagonism to each other.

Application: Truth and error are mutually exclusive in God's economy. Each time we fail to apply the principles of God's Word to experience, we make God a liar. He is not a liar but we make Him to appear as a liar. Whenever we allow legalism, asceticism or outright sin to come into our lives, we make God out to be a liar. We especially make Him out to be a liar when we deny the truth that is in Jesus.

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

There is no possible reconciliation between truth and error for the Bible believing Christian. There are no gray areas when it comes to the truth of Jesus Christ or His work. There are no gray areas when it comes to absolutes that flow from that truth. The Christian has the anointing from the Holy Spirit to help him discriminate between right and wrong.

The believer in absolutes does not blend truth and error. There are areas that are gray in the Christian life but these are not in the absolute category of right and wrong. The Christian cannot hold to relative ethics and still believe in the Bible. "It is okay to have sex with my girlfriend if I love her." This kind of love justifies sin. Biblically, this is rationalization of sin. It is a lie and falsehood.

Titus 1:2 "...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..."

The believer has the Spirit of God in his heart and the Word of God in his mind to protect him from error. Every Christian has the ability to understand divine revelation because he has the indwelling Holy Spirit in him. The Holy Spirit will unfold and illumine God's Word to us if we are willing to receive it.

Non-Christians cannot understand divine truth for all they have is a soul but not the spirit that comes from new birth in Christ.

1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man [the man who is nothing but mind, emotion and will; he does not have the life of God in him] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 John 2:22

"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

John now identifies the antichrists of verse 18. An antichrist is someone who denies that Jesus is the Messiah. They also deny more than that Jesus was the anticipated Messiah; they deny that He is the "Son" [the Son of God] and that He came in the flesh (4:2-3; 2 John 7). They rejected the idea that he stepped foot in humanity and died in that humanity to save our souls.

The antichrists taught that a divine presence came on Jesus at His baptism and left Him before He died on the cross. They reduced Him to a mere man invested with divine powers for a period. They denied that He was the eternal Son of God.

This view of Cerinthus struck at the very heart of the incarnation. The reason these false teachers came to this conclusion is that they accepted a popular doctrine of that time known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism believed that anything material is sinful. That is why they could not bring themselves to believe in the humanity of Christ. They believed humanity itself was sinful.

5:1 "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him... 5 Who is he who overcomes the world,

but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

John uses the word "liar" five times in 1 John. This is a harsh word. The antichrists were liars in character because they rejected Jesus as the Son of God and His genuine humanity simultaneously. Denying the incarnation strikes at the very essence of the gospel. Jesus must be both fully man and fully God to save our souls. That makes Him the perfect Mediator for our sins.

The word "denies" is continual action in the Greek. This gives the idea that their denial was not on an occasion but an incessant unbelief. The word "denies" can carry the idea of renounce, repudiate or disown.

The "Christ" refers to Jesus' work as the Messiah. It presents to us His office. Jesus is God's Anointed One who saves us from our sin. God the Father sent His eternal Son as Mediator for our sins.

Principle: The person and work of Christ is the foundation to our faith.

Application: Nothing is more important to the Christian faith than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Our eternal future and our experience with God in time revolve around this.

It is impossible to fellowship with God without an understanding of the finished work of Christ because that is the foundation of fellowship with God.

The heresy that denies the person and work of Christ is still with us today. Cults such as the Jehovah witnesses and Christian Science distort the true gospel. Our salvation rests on believing in Jesus as God and in His humanity as the sacrifice for our sins.

John 20:30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Col. 2:9 "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son

John clearly identifies an "antichrist." He is someone who "denies the Father and the Son." Note that this denial also involves the Father. A person cannot reject the Son without rejecting the Father. Denying the Son correlates with denying the Father. One involves the other.

Matt. 11:27 "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

The ultimate lie of the Devil is to reject the Father's plan of redemption in the Son. The Devil hates the person and work of Christ more than anything else.

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Principle: Antichrists reject God's plan of salvation in Christ.

Application: Most apostasy starts at denying either the humanity or the deity of Christ. Anyone who claims that Jesus Christ is merely a great teacher, a profound philosopher or a wonderful religious leader is a "liar." Jesus is far more than these. He is the Son of God, the Mediator for our sins, God Almighty and true humanity.

If you refuse to accept Jesus Christ as fully God, fully man who died for our sins, you are a liar. You are someone who undermines God's plan for salvation. When you deny Jesus as the Messiah, you deny God's solution for your sins.

1 John 2:23

"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also."

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either;

John now employs a universal statement – "whoever." There are no exceptions to believing in Jesus Christ for salvation. If a person denies the Son, there is no question that he does not have a relationship with the Father. The one goes with the other. If you reject the Son, you reject the Father.

he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also

The word “acknowledge” is a synonym to the word believe. Only believing in the Son’s suffering for our sin can we receive redemption from the Father.

Principle: There are no exceptions to God’s exclusive way to heaven.

Application: Many who defect from Christianity were never true believers in the first place. Now they put off their appearance of biblical Christianity. They revert to type. They were not sheep but dogs and pigs all along.

2 Peter 2:22 “But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”

Every antichrist system at work in the world today assaults the deity of Christ. These systems do come in the form of religion. That makes it very deceptive for the naive who believe that religion is always good.

God says that we cannot have the Father without the Son. There is no equivocation in this. Not all roads lead to Rome biblically. Jesus is the only road to heaven (John 14:6).

Acts 4:12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Any religious system that denies either the deity or the humanity of Christ is from Satan and his religious scheme of things. There is no exception to God’s plan for salvation in Christ’s finished work on the cross.

If we do not accept this, we forfeit any relationship to the Father. To reject the Son is to reject the Father. We cannot believe in God without believing in Jesus. If we deny the Lord, we incur eternal damnation. This will cost us eternal life. This is a matter of eternal life and eternal death.

2 Peter 2:1 “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction”

Jude 4 “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 John 2:24

“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

John turns to the responsibility of his readers to avoid being taken in by the false teachers of the previous verses. First, they are to remain true to the original message they received when they became Christians. This is a spiritual safeguard against falling away from the foundation of Christianity.

Therefore let that abide in you

God wants the believer to let eternal truths abide in his soul. John uses “abide” six times in this section. The idea is continuing assimilation of God’s truth to experience. It is not enough to assent formally to the message of the past; we must own it for our lives now. If we continually apply the principles of the Word to experience, we will engage with the reality of the Word.

Abiding has to do with fellowship, not relationship. Fellowship produces fruit-bearing in the Christian life.

which you heard from the beginning.

First, it is our responsibility to let the Word abide in us. Secondly, it is God’s responsibility to give the Word in the first place – “which you heard from the beginning.”

The phrase “which you heard” refers to something handed down from the past that is constantly true and reliable. The tense indicates that God handed down the Word at a given time in the past. It is our responsibility to allow the unalterable Word of God live at home in our souls harmoniously.

Principle: If we accept salvation by faith, we should accept the fullness of the Christian life by faith.

Application: When someone comes along with unique doctrine, it is always a red flag. Truth is

always older than error. The challenge is to remain true to apostolic teaching – to the teaching of the New Testament. We hold fast to the faithful Word because our fellowship with God in both eternity and time revolve around it.

Titus 1:9 “...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

We must not forget foundational things. Everything we know about God we learned from the Bible. We cannot forget about fundamental truth, basic truth, if we want to move on in the Christian life. The crucial concern is that we engage with God through His Word.

Col. 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Steadfastness in truth received is a high priority to God. God’s Word is a finished quantity of truth. It is not in a state of flux making it indefinite. Truth in the beginning is truth in the end. It is an anchor for the soul.

If we allow the truth to dwell in us, we will have intimate fellowship with God. We must allow truth to have a vital place in our priorities and behavior. Orthodoxy is one thing but “orthopraxy” is another. It is one thing to formally believe truth but it is something else to practice what we believe.

John 15:7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Letting the message abide in us is more than applying the Bible to experience occasionally. If we let it abide in us, it will take hold of us. Cursory trafficking in the Word will not deliver the change in our lives that we need. The Word must abide in us in order to possess us. It needs to grip our souls and find lodgment in our souls. It will change our lives if we allow it to do so.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you,

The Greek puts great emphasis on “you.” That is, “For you believers, you in contrast to unbelievers, if you remain true to where you started, you will abide in the Son and the Father.” It is possible to let foundational truths slip from us. Many people start out fine but they do not finish well.

The emphasis here is hearing what God said in His Word at the beginning. If God’s truth abides in us in a dynamic way, we will experience continuing vital fellowship with God in time. Going back to the incarnation (God dwelling in man) is the sum substance and foundation to abiding.

Principle: God gave us the Word that we might have a stable, ongoing fellowship with Him.

Application: Many people start out fine but they do not finish well in the Christian life. How many people have you seen fall away from a dynamic faith and engagement with the Word of God?

Have you lost interest in the Word of God? Many churches devolve into religious country clubs having no interest in the Word. They are more interested in a social life than they are listening to what God has to say.

God intends that His Word take hold of our lives. He did not design it to lay dead on dusty pages of a black book. He desires that we interact with what He has said.

Rom. 15:4 “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. 5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We live in a day when evangelicals put heavy emphasis on the subjective rather than the objective. It is high time that we return to the objective Word of God and engage with it actively. An objective orientation to Scriptures gives us confidence, stability and clear direction for our lives.

you also will abide in the Son and in the Father

The word “also” serves to add the experience of fellowship with God on a firsthand, experiential basis. Genuine communication with the Father and the Son depends on believing the original message of the gospel.

The word “abide” conveys the idea of persist, continue. “Continue in a vital fellowship with the Son and the Father.” The degree of fellowship with God will determine how well we stand against error.

The “Son” is the key to fellowship with the Father. Christ the Son of God is truth itself; to abide in the truth is to abide in Him. Fellowship with the Father depends on fellowship with the Son.

Principle: Fellowship with the Father depends on fellowship with the Son.

Application: If we do not have a high regard for Christ we cannot have fellowship with the Father. If I do not like your personality, we probably will not get along very well. We cannot have a dynamic fellowship with the Father without a vibrant relationship with the Son.

There is an inescapable inference from letting the Word of God grip our souls and that is that we will have rich fellowship with God. When we do, He will provide for us at home, at work and at play. We will experience His presence in everything. He will walk us through pain and tribulation. We can trust Him through it all.

John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

There is a big difference between being “in” something and “abiding in” it. This is the story of John 15. The believer (the branch) is in the vine (the Lord) by virtue of union to Him by faith. The vine imparts His life to the branch in order to produce fruit. We could not produce that fruit without drawing the energy of the vine. When the life of the vine is imparted to the branch, dynamic fellowship occurs.

John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

There is reciprocity in this as well. When we accept by faith the promises of the Word God provides for us. We allow the will of God to flow through us. The fellowship in this is rich.

1 John 2:25

“And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life.”

And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life

This verse closely connects to the immediate context. John introduces the idea of eternal life to expose the antichrists of the preceding section. They did not possess eternal life. They tried to introduce a system of salvation and spirituality by works.

Yet, the issue is not salvation for John’s readers. They settled that issue long ago. They have eternal security. God donates eternal life freely as a gift. Their issue was not salvation but false teachers who tried to impose a false system of spirituality on them.

Fellowship with the Son and the Father (v. 24) is an eternal relationship. The hope of eternal life is certain. Fellowship in time is a foretaste of fellowship in eternity. Every believer possesses God’s pledge of eternal life.

The One who makes the promise here is Jesus. Those who possess eternal life give evidence of their relationship with the Father and the Son by fellowshiping with them. This starkly contrasts the one who truly possesses eternal life and the one who merely professes that he has the life of God.

The New Testament uses the word “promise” to emphasize God guarantee for the future. God’s promises will find fulfillment because He is true to His Word. The word “promise” is a legal term denoting a summons. The eternal life that God gives He maintains.

John 10:28 “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”

Principle: We realize the promise of eternal life by abiding.

Application: Our eternal keeping does not rest on the uncertainty of merit or works; it rests solely on the finished work of Christ on the cross. We link to the finished work of Christ by believing God's promise. We hold Him to His promise. The guarantee of eternal life rests completely on the believability of God.

2 Cor. 1:20 "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

We do not have to worry about God making good on His promises. When God gives testimony to something He will deliver on it.

We cannot put our confidence in men. They break national treaties and personal promises all the time. God never goes back on His Word.

Num. 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do?"

Rom. 4:20 "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

Titus 1:2 "...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..."

Whenever we doubt the promises of God, we know that the Devil is at work in our lives. Any time we put a question mark on God's Word, Satan is busy at work on us.

Rom. 3:3 "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.""

And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life

Eternal life is not in question as some of the antichrists asserted. John's readers passed from death to life at the moment of salvation (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14). God always links eternal life with regeneration. The Christian passes from death to

eternal life at the point of belief in Christ. He receives life as God has it (John 3:15). God not only wants us to enjoy eternal life in eternity but also in time.

Biblically, life results from faith in Christ (John 3:15f, 36; 5:24, 40; 6:40,47,53f; 10:10; 20:31; 1 John 3:15; 5:12,13). Eternal life is the polar opposite of death. Eternal life primarily belongs to God. Jesus also has life in Himself (John 1:4; 5:26; 6:57; 1 John 1:1f; 5:11,20).

Titus 1:2 "...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..."

Eternal life is not only quantity of life but also quality of life. When God saves us, He saves us body, soul and spirit. We possess a new essence of life, the life of God Himself.

Principle: Our eternal security rests on the credibility of God's promise.

Application: Eternal death came through sin (Ro 5:12). Sin forfeited life with God. Impartation of God's life to the sinner comes through shedding of blood, the life of the flesh. The blood of Christ gives eternal life by reason of the sacrifice of Christ's life. Removal of death comes by the sacrifice of Christ's life.

Our eternal future is secure because it rests on the credibility of God's promise. The person who believes on Jesus Christ possesses eternal life. The issue of eternal life was settled long ago for the Christian.

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

Eternal life is more than life in the future; we can enjoy the dynamic of eternal life in time. It is a possession of the present because it comes from a promise. That is why we have assurance and not some vague wish for the future. The Christian rests on this safeguard.

1 John 2:26

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

John continues to write about the antichrists of verse eighteen. All believers need cautions of false teachers and false teaching. These false teachers

love to seduce susceptible believers away from sound doctrine.

In the next verse, John shows an antidote against apostasy -- we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit to protect us from error.

Principle: Believers should be on their toes against religious deception launched by Satan himself.

Application: There is no doubt that some Christians are vulnerable to deception. Immature believers are susceptible to pseudo spirituality. Usually, these are people who know very little of the Word of God. Satan leads believers astray by counterfeit. His primary system for deception is religion. He gets as close to the genuine thing as possible without being the genuine thing.

2 Cor. 11:13 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. **15** Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."

1 Tim. 4:1 "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..."

Without spiritual safeguards, Satan will sweep Christians in false doctrine. Many Christians are open to religious tangents. Satan follows the principle - divide and conquer.

1 John 2:27

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

Verse 27 is the solution to the religious deception of verse 26.

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you,

The Holy Spirit's presence ever abides in the believer. He lives, remains and stays in every Christian. No sin will drive Him away. His abiding presence remains with each Christian.

John discussed "the anointing" in verse 20. The anointing refers to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to work in the life of the believer. In this case, the indwelling Holy Spirit helps ferret out false teachers and false teaching.

and you do not need that anyone teach you;

The idea is not that the anointing of the Holy Spirit preempts a teacher of the Word of God but that He co-operates with it to protect us against apostasy. No man can add anything to what the Holy Spirit taught John's readers so there is no need for any further revelation. There is then no need that a false teacher teaches you anything!

Principle: The Holy Spirit protects every believer from religious tangents.

Application: Satan can easily seduce baby Christians. They are the most susceptible to spiritual infection. The first thing you know is that they have come down with some spiritual sickness. The Holy Spirit is their spiritual safeguard. He will keep them from being swept away on religious tangents.

Do you have difficulty extracting principles of the Word to live the Christian life? If you do, you have help. God promises that His Holy Spirit will enable you to understand divine truth.

This does not mean that we always come to the right understanding of the Bible. Every person has misunderstandings about Scripture but the idea here is that the Holy Spirit will process us toward the truth and keep us from error.

It is possible to hear with our ears but not understand in our spirit. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 13. He illumines our minds and hearts. He goes further by bringing us under conviction about a truth. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and makes the child of God like the Son of God.

Matt. 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. **14** "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; **15** For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have

closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”

Acts 20:22 “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 “except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.”

Eph. 1:17 “...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...”

The human teacher is only an instrument. An instrument cannot take the place of the Holy Spirit or contradict the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit delivers us from the error of false teachers. He will alert us to novel explanations of Scripture peddled by antichrists. The Spirit will dispense with their teaching if the child of God responds to His indwelling presence.

Bible taught and Spirit grounded believers have the best protection against people pretending to represent God with new truth.

but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things,

The resource of the Holy Spirit indwelling each believer is all that anyone needs to discern true doctrine. The Holy Spirit teaches doctrine, any doctrine that a believer needs to grow in the faith or discern false teaching. The Holy Spirit will teach us everything we need to know about spirituality and false doctrine.

The scope of the Holy Spirit’s teaching ministry is “all things.” There is nothing more disgusting than a know-it-all. No teacher is infallible. The idea here is that there is nothing excluded from the teaching ministry of the Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit will help any believer anywhere to detect false teaching.

and is true, and is not a lie,

The phrase “is true, and is not a lie” contrasts truth and error. Believers can rest assured that what the Holy Spirit teaches is true. It is true as to

its character; it is consistent with God and His Word. His teaching has no deception like that of the antichrists.

and just as it has taught you,

The Holy Spirit taught John’s readers from the point of their salvation.

you will abide in Him

Abiding in the Holy Spirit presupposes intimate fellowship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit abides in you and you abide in Him. When you effectively relate to the Holy Spirit, you “abide in Him.” That is, you fellowship with Him.

Principle: The Holy Spirit is the only one who can illumine the Word of God to the child of God.

Application: The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word of God to the child of God. He enables the believer to understand the Bible. When the Christian loses interest in the Bible, he loses interest in the Son of God. He does not lose his salvation but he loses the dynamic of the Christian faith. We cannot love the Lord Jesus without thinking about Him. We put Him foremost on our minds by listening to His Word. The Holy Spirit will enable us to engage with the truth as it is in Jesus.

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

John 16:12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 “All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”

If the Holy Spirit does not teach you, you are not well taught. Unless the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart while you listen to Bible teachers and study the Bible for yourself, the Word of God will not have much effect on you. You do not have “ears to hear.”

Some believers conclude from this verse that they do not need a human teacher to teach them the

Bible. No, the Holy Spirit uses human teachers to teach us (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). He uses the apostle John to teach his readers.

Every Christian needs the Holy Spirit to enable him to understand divine truth. This is an intensely personal work of the Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:10 "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. **11** For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. **13** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **14** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. **15** But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. **16** For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

1 John 2:28

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

And now, little children,

John continues to appeal to born again believers.

abide in Him,

"Abide in Him" is a command. Abiding concerns both belief and behavior.

Principle: Abiding means to walk in fellowship with the Lord.

Application: Abiding in Him means that we believe the Lord's promises, we apply His principles and we love Him and serve Him. We allow the Holy Spirit to fill and control us. We trust Him in everything.

Abiding means that we willingly do God's will. It may mean that we must deal radically with some

sin or injury. If we abide in Him, we are prepared to do what He asks of us. It means we accept our present situation. We may not like it but we believe in His sovereign hand on our lives. We accept His design for our lives. Abiding in Him may mean that we may have to deal with a broken relationship. If we deal with these things, we will look forward to Jesus' coming with confidence.

that when He appears,

The word "that" expresses purpose. An important belief for every believer is to be ready for the coming of Christ.

We can translate the word "when" as whenever. There is no doubt that He is coming back. His coming is certain.

Principle: A great motivation for spirituality is standing on the tiptoe of expectancy for Christ's return.

Application: Christians should stand on the tiptoe of expectancy for Christ's coming. We should live in such close fellowship with the Lord that His coming is just a continuation of our current fellowship with Him.

The Rapture should cultivate an immediate spirituality. If we expect Him to come at any moment, we will be ready when He comes. The prospect of His Coming is a great motivation for Christian living.

There is a great day ahead for every believer. We will come face-to-face with Jesus the Lord. Oh, what a day!! This is the most often mentioned truth in the New Testament so it carries great weight. It is amazing that many Christians today negate prophecy while the Bible emphasizes it. The Rapture is the believer's "blessed hope."

1 Thess. 4:16 "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words."

The Rapture affords great hope to despairing situations. There is hope beyond the bleak, black terminus of all existence – the grave. There is

nothing like the hope of the coming of Christ in a situation in bleak circumstances.

2 Tim. 4:8 "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

When Jesus steps into time again, it will be to come for each believer. That event could occur today. There is no prophetic event that needs fulfillment before it happens. It could be today!

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

Anticipation of the Rapture purifies our heart. It keeps us in a state of expectancy.

we may have confidence

Secular Greek used the word "confidence" in the political sphere to describe freedom of speech. That was the special privilege of the democratic city-state of Greece. They did not permit slaves to speak in the assembly. Only freemen had the right to speak in the political assembly.

This word "confidence" carries the idea of courage to speak with candor. It comes to mean fearless confidence when Jesus comes. This means a person with nothing between his soul and the Savior can meet Him when He returns with open arms.

and not be ashamed before Him at His coming

Shame is the opposite of confidence. A person with shame may express apprehension at the Lord's coming. No Christian should be ashamed at the coming of Christ. Christians abiding in Him will not be ashamed at His coming.

The "coming" of Christ means presence. The Greeks used the word "coming" for the coming of a dignitary to their city. They made special preparation for his coming. He received pomp and circumstance. They put streets and buildings

in repair. The coming of Christ will be an event of great moment.

Principle: Christians who walk in fellowship with the Lord will not be ashamed at His coming.

Application: Dynamic Christians who live consistent lives in fellowship with the Lord will not be ashamed before Him at His coming. They will not be ashamed of their unbelief, cowardice, lust, resentment, hatred, jealousy or any other sin.

Christians can have two reactions to Christ's coming. They can "have confidence" or they can "be ashamed." Those are the two options.

A believer with "confidence" will not be full of regrets or shame. His conscience is clear before the Lord. The believer with a sense of "shame" will face the Lord with a sense of regret. However, it will not last long because there will be no regret in heaven.

There will be no rationalization or excuses before the Lord. He is omniscient and knows everything we have ever done and the true motivations for doing them.

1 Cor. 3:12 "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **13** each one's work will become clear; for the Day [the Rapture and Judgment Seat of Christ] will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. **14** If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. **15** If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

1 Cor. 4:5 "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

What we do in time, will count for eternity. Jesus will measure every motive, every act to see if they were worthy of His name. He will ask questions such as these: "Did you introduce anyone to Jesus? Did you bring others with you into my presence? Did you walk in the Spirit on a consistent basis?"

Some will hide themselves like Adam in the garden when God called out to him, "Adam,

where are you?" (Ge 3:9f). We will not be able to hide anything before the Lord when we stand before Him in stark nakedness.

1 John 2:29

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

Verses 28 and 29 begin a section running through chapter three that deals with how the believer relates to God's righteousness. A life characterized by sin is compatible with a God of absolute righteousness.

John 2:28-3:3 deal with the motivation for righteousness – the Rapture. Those who anticipate the Rapture will meet the Lord with an attitude of courage. The reason for this courage is their walk with Him in time. They are confident of their fellowship with Him.

If you know that He is righteous,

John referred to the coming of the Lord Jesus in the Rapture in the previous verse. This is a reminder that Jesus is perfect righteous. The believer's encounter with Him at that time will bring to light all shame and unrighteousness.

The word "righteous" occurs six times in 1 John: 1:9, 2:1, 2:29, 3:7 [2x], and 3:12. John also uses this term in his gospel 3 times: John 5:30; 7:24; 17:25.

you know that everyone who practices righteousness

Note the emphasis on the two words for "know" in this verse: "If you know...you know." These are two different Greek words for know. The first word for "know" means to know inherently, "If you know inherently or are aware that He is righteous."

The second Greek word means perceive, experientially know, "You discern or perceive that..." That is, "If you clearly understand that the Lord is absolutely righteous, you will know by experience that those who reflect His righteousness are spiritually born of Him."

The genuine believer consistently reflects God's righteousness. One righteousness produces another righteousness of the same kind. God's righteousness produces His righteousness in the

believer. God's righteousness is the source or cause of the believer's righteousness.

is born of Him

Christians who walk in God's righteousness demonstrate their relationship with the Father. It is the mark of regeneration. The fact that some Christians do not "practice righteousness" does not militate against the truth of this statement.

The idea of a spiritual birth occurs a number of times in 1 John: 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18 [twice]. People in the family of God will produce behavior like their Father. The child of God will behave like God.

Principle: Truly born again people behave like their Father who re-generated them.

Application: How do we recognize a genuine believer? Is there a way to decipher whether someone truly belongs to the Lord Jesus? There are many religious phonies out there. Many people profess to know Jesus Christ who never had a genuine relationship with Him.

Many people do religious and right acts in society but never embraced Jesus as their Savior. Their conformity to the laws of society does not reflect that they belong to God at all. Their acts of righteousness are still unrighteous in God's economy. Their righteousness is not the righteousness of an absolutely righteous God because it is a selfish, ego-oriented righteousness. This kind of righteousness may be helpful to human beings but its source comes from the sin capacity, from the self, from self-interest.

Rom. 3:10 "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one..."

There is a great distinction between God's absolute righteousness and man's relative righteousness. Truly born again believers reflect God's absolute righteousness. This does not mean that they are absolutely righteous in their experience but that their relationship with the Father reflects righteousness beyond themselves.

Christians possess an absolute judicial righteousness. God declares them as righteous as He is righteous by faith.

Rom. 3:21 "But now the righteousness of God [God's righteousness] apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God,

through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified [to declare righteous] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness [God's righteousness], because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

1 John 3

1 John 3:1

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

Behold

John wants his readers to take special note of something. The word "behold" is a command to focus on the subject at hand. This is a dramatic word conveying an idea similar to someone pulling a cord that unveils a statue in a public meeting. He says in effect, "Take note of the amazing, unadulterated, undying love of God for us."

Look at the special uses of the word "behold" in Scripture:

Jer. 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth."

John 1:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

1 Cor. 15:51 "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Jude 14 "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Rev. 1:7 "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Rev. 1:18 "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Principle: God wants us to take special note of His unique love for us.

Application: God wants us to take special note of His unconditional love. He wants us to concentrate on the nature of His love. John calls attention to the wonderful exhibition of God's love for us.

God's love is self-sacrificing, one-way love that is free to relate to us because of the death of His Son for our sins. That love is unconditional, unadulterated, undiminished, undying, persistent and insistent. We can never 'out-sin' His love for us. His love is greater than anything we do or say.

what manner of love

More than God's love is at issue here. It is more than that He loved us; it is how He loved us. The words "what manner" connote quality. Note the quality of the Father's love. His love is perfect and unconditional. He wraps His love in the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament uses "manner" seven times. Here are a couple uses of the word "manner:"

Matt. 8:27 "So the men marveled, saying, 'Who [what quality of person] can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'"

2 Peter 3:11 "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"

The word "love" is not primarily an emotional word; instead, it describes an attitude where the mind and will are the overriding idea. God loves sinful people not because they are loveable but in spite of the fact that they are not loveable. God always seeks our highest good. His loves never wavers toward us.

Rom. 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Principle: Christians need to hold in high regard the nature of God's love.

Application: Do you esteem the love of God? We see His love best in the transformation of sinful people into the children of God by the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin. Note what kind of love, what quality of love, what depth of love, and what viscosity of love that is! No love is like God's love for us. His love exceeds the love of a mother for her child.

Jer. 31:3 "The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'"

Rom. 8:38 "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Eph. 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us..."

2 Thess. 3:5 "Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ."

No poet or preacher can exhaust the love of God. He loves us in pain as much as in health. He loves us as much when we are pinched financially as when we are prosperous. We should not confuse God's gifts with God's love. It is a distortion of great moment to say that I can tell how much God loves me by how much He blesses me materially.

The Spirit of God directs us again and again to the love of God and the quality of His love for us. We so easily forget His love for us.

2 Cor. 13:11 "Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

the Father has bestowed on us,

The Father bestowed His love on us in the past with the result that it continues with us [perfect tense]. We experienced God's love at salvation as a permanent possession.

The word "bestowed" means to give. God gives His love to us as a possession. We are forever the permanent objects of His love. He takes the initiative in love and freely gives it to us in grace.

Principle: God's love comes to us by unadulterated grace.

Application: God does not have to prove His love for us except through Jesus Christ. He gave His best when He gave Jesus. Anything beyond that is trivial. He gave us the most when He gave His Son.

2 Cor. 9:15 "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

God's love is a donation to us. We do not earn it nor deserve it. It is of unadulterated grace.

Rom. 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

that we should be called children of God!

The word "that" indicates result - with the result that God gives us the title of His children. We are God's elect, God's aristocracy. God gives us both His name and His nature. There is nothing in us that motivated God to love us and to give us the label of being in His family.

John later speaks of "the children of the devil" in verse 10. Children of the Devil bear resemblance to their father the Devil. That is why they are vulgar and profane. It is perfectly natural that children of the Devil act like their father. They bear family resemblance.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does

not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

Principle: God gives believers the honor of holding the title of His family.

Application: God gives us a greater honor than the recognition of men; it is the honor to be a child of God, a son of eternal destiny. This is an entirely different value system of measurement than that of the world. God measures us by belong to His family and not by power or position.

We can never be good enough for God to love us. He does not love us on the basis of who we are but on the basis of who He is. Acceptance of God's love is by faith not works. We would never know whether we were in God's love if it depended on our measuring up to God. Gaining God's love by works warps the idea of the grace of God.

Christians have a great calling. We would treat each other better if we would remember that.

Therefore

"Therefore" is literally because of this. Because we are God's aristocracy, the world does not know us. The believer's likeness to God is the occasion of misunderstanding by non-Christians.

the world does not know us,

The word "know" means to know by experience of observation. Unbelievers did not understand Christ when He was among them. Neither can the world understand Christians when they observe them. The believer's worldview is so distinct from the world that non-Christians cannot recognize their quality of life.

because it did not know Him

The world did not welcome Christ at His first coming so it does not understand His followers either.

John 1:10 "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."

John 14:16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you

know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

Principle: The world does not have the spiritual capacity to know what either God or Christians are about.

Application: The world does not recognize us as the children of God. It looks upon us as just another subculture in society. The reason is that non-Christians do not have spiritual perception. They are dead spiritually.

1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Although the non-Christian world may recognize us as Christians in name, they do not have a clue as to what it truly means. We should not expect that the world would recognize our relationship to the Father. They may even resent that relationship because it reflects on their lack of transcendent values.

The reason non-Christians reject your testimony and the testimony of Christ is that they shut down volitionally. They do not believe so they cannot see.

1 Cor. 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

The world tips its hat at the baby Jesus during the Christmas season because it is good business. Many people get a dab of religion around Christmas but it is just religious veneer.

Genuine Christians will always be in the minority until Jesus comes. We will never win our entire nation to Jesus Christ. We will receive the kingdom after He comes back and establishes His kingdom.

Luke 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

1 Cor. 2:7 "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

1 John 3:2

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

Beloved,

Christians are the objects of love – of both the apostle John’s love and the Father’s love. God loves us with an infinite love.

Principle: God’s love for us is infinite and unconditional.

Application: God loves every other Christian as much as He loves us. They may be jerks but God loves them. God loves us in the face of who we are and He loves them in spite of who they are. God does not love on the basis of who people are; He loves on the basis of who He is. God loves out of His own character.

Human love is often unjust. It plays favorites and prejudices against ethnic groups or even other Christians. God’s love is always just.

now we are children of God;

John contrasts the present and future state of the believer. The word “now” represents the present state of the Christian. A person becomes a child of God at the moment of salvation (John 1:12).

Eternal salvation is not progressive but instantaneous (John 5:24). There will never be a time when a child of God is not a child of God.

and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be,

Although Christians are God’s children, they are not yet what they will be. They are in process now but they will come to a point of perfection at a future time.

We are “now” the children of God in contrast to the “not yet.” What we are now is a foretaste of what we will be. Our present state as a Christian is an indication of our future glory.

Principle: Our current state as a Christian is an earnest of what we will be.

Application: Christians have a wonderful future. The Bible reveals something of what it will be like after we go into God’s presence. It gives a partial but not full revelation of what we will be like after

Jesus comes back. Scriptures use mostly negative descriptions such as no more pain, tears, death, night or sorrow.

We all suffer pain in this life. God has a purpose in everything we go through. He makes us more like the Lord Jesus in suffering. This is our “light affliction.” It is light in comparison to the benefit of entering the glory of the eternal state.

2 Cor. 4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart.

Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Growing old has to be painful for those without Christ. They have nothing for which to look forward except loss of health and the bleak, black terminus of the grave. Their limbs creak and their bodies ache. The best is yet ahead for the Christian old person. He has a brighter and better day. Each is one day closer to the most blessed state yet.

Thank God that we are not now what we were. Again, we thank God that we are not what we shall be. Oh what a transformation there will be when Jesus comes again.

but we know that when He is revealed,

John conveys a note of hope – the coming of Christ for His own. The word “know” portrays the idea of sureness, “We know with innate assurance that we will be like Him.” Christians will receive full transformation, spiritually and physically, at the point when Christ comes back at the Rapture.

The Bible does not give the exact time when Jesus will come back but whenever that event occurs, God will transform Christians into a perfect state. There is a radical contrast between the present state and the future state of the believer.

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

we shall be like Him,

We will be “like Him” when Jesus comes back. This is the point when He conforms every believer to His image or nature. The present process of being formed into the image of Christ will become final when Jesus comes. Christianity conforms us to Christ.

1 Cor. 15:49 “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

1 Cor. 15:51 “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

2 Cor. 3:18 “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Principle: Jesus will conform us into His image perfectly when He comes back.

Application: The body that we have now is a wonderful piece of workmanship but it is nothing compared to the body we will have in that day. The best is yet ahead.

Our bodies will be just like Jesus’ resurrected body when Jesus comes. Our character will be like Jesus one day. This is the consummation of salvation. The Devil will not thwart this event for God predestines us to be just like Jesus.

Rom. 8:29 “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

There will be no selfishness in me when I receive my glorified body.

for we shall see Him as He is

There will be a day when we will see Jesus with unhindered direct sight when we meet Him in His immediate presence. We will see Him in His resurrected body. We will not see Jesus hanging on the cross writhing in agony. No, we will see Him in His glorified state as the conquering Son of God.

Principle: When we see Jesus in His glorified state, it will transform us into His likeness.

Application: The sight of Jesus face-to-face will transform us because like begets like. A scientific mind grasps scientific truths. We will be able to see Christ because we will be like Him. We become like the person we worship.

Rev. 1:17 “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.’”

1 John 3:3

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

And everyone who has this hope in Him

“This hope” refers to the Rapture when God will make the believer to be just like the Lord Jesus. The word “hope” means confident expectation concerning something in the future. The hope in this case rests “in Him.” Jesus’ coming is the foundation for our hope. We do not find hope in ourselves. Our hope is set on Christ.

The Rapture is a strong incentive to purity. God transforms the believer with a very strong hope for Christ’s return. Eager hope will produce a changed life.

The word “in” in the phrase “in Him” means upon. This is a term of trust or rest. It is a hope set on and resting on Christ.

Rom. 15:12 “And again, Isaiah says: ‘There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.’”

1 Tim. 4:10 “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”

1 Tim. 5:5 “Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.”

Principle: Hope produces purity.

Application: Anticipation of company coming for dinner triggers preparation for their coming. Anticipation of Christ’s coming makes a difference in how we behave. As the hymn says, “The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His

glory and grace." Jesus may come momentarily, do you have anything you need to straighten out before He comes?

The person looking for the momentary coming of the Lord keeps short accounts with God. He does not harbor grudges in his heart against anyone. Search your heart just in case you need to deal with anything before Jesus comes.

Phil. 3:12 "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

purifies himself,

John's purpose in writing is both doctrinal and ethical. Genuine doctrine always affects how we live our lives. The word "purifies" means to cleanse from anything that is inconsistent with the character of Christ. Believers in fellowship accept the responsibility of keeping themselves clean for Christ's sake.

Cleansing does not obtain hope. To the contrary, hope begets cleansing. Anyone who knows about and engages with the imminent return of Christ purifies himself.

just as He is pure

The word "He" is emphatic - "Just as He Himself is pure." How pure is Jesus? He is perfect purity. Jesus is free from any contamination of sin. Christ was infinitely and immutably holy in Himself as God but he maintained freedom from sin in His humanity.

Principle: Cleansing of sin is crucial for fellowship with the Lord and growth in Christ.

Application: We could be a good secretary, an employer or medical doctor and do a good job without being a Christian but we cannot be good Christians and maintain malice in our hearts. "Let every man examine himself first" then we partake of the Lord's Supper. If we have hard feelings in our heart toward anyone when we dial heaven, we will get a busy signal (1 Peter 3:7). We cannot

afford these things as Christians for they will oxidize our spiritual apparatus.

No one on earth is important enough to hate. If we carry hate in our hearts, joy will depart from our souls. The thrill of the Christian life will depart from us. Do you have your books balanced in this area before you meet the Lord face to face?

Your enemy does not have to like you. They may never come to the place where they deal with their problem or sin. They may never dance to your tune. Leave them with God. Their problems are none of your affairs. Do not let them ruin your Christian life. Your main concern is pleasing the Lord and meeting Him with a clear conscience. We want to be a blessing, not a cursing, to people.

2 Cor. 7:1 "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The crisis of salvation triggers a life-long process of conformity to Christ. Salvation sets in motion a process of progressively becoming more like Jesus Christ. This is the unfinished work of Christ in us. We are not now like our Lord Jesus so we need to grow in grace

2 Peter 3:18 "...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

God preordained that we would eventually become just like our Lord Jesus Christ. That goal will culminate in death or the Rapture.

1 John 3:4

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

Whoever commits sin

John continues his thought of cleansing from sin in the believer. Now he takes up the subject of the believer out of fellowship, the carnal believer.

Sin is incompatible with spiritual birth (3:1-3). It is contrary to our regenerate nature. Sin stands in opposition to the purity of the previous verse.

Principle: We must not take sin lightly because it is at heart rebellion against God.

Application: Sin is incompatible with our regeneration. It is not befitting to a member of the family of God. It is incompatible with the will of God.

A believer in fellowship wants to do the will of God, not his own will. When filled with the Spirit, he produces God's character and lives according to God's norms.

A carnal believer wants to please the Lord by operation bootstraps. He thinks that pseudo spirituality will please God. He believes that asceticism, emotionalism or ecstatic experience pleases the Lord. This is spirituality by works and not by the power of the Spirit. When he allows the sin capacity to control him, he does nothing but sin and lawlessness.

also commits lawlessness,

"Lawlessness" pays no heed to God's law and holds contempt for it. The New Testament renders this word iniquity. "Lawlessness" is more than transgression of God's law for it also conveys the idea of rebellion against it.

Lawlessness is the rejection of law rather than merely the absence of law. Sin and violation of God's law are identical concepts.

Principle: We declare rebellion against God when we break the laws of His character.

Application: Lawlessness is not merely the violation of the laws of man, the laws of society. Lawlessness is not simply robbing a bank but much more the violation of the character of God. It is defiance against God.

Hatred violates God's law of love because it results in divorce, acts of violence, and children who follow those patterns. People who do not believe in God's restraint of their natural instincts end in lawlessness.

God's law is an expression of His absolute character. We declare rebellion against God when we break the laws of His character. Sin both defiles God's righteousness and defies God's righteousness.

The more earnest we are and the more serious we are about pleasing God, the more alarm we have about the sin issue in our lives. God's law is an expression of God's character. It defines and

draws lines around the nature of God. If we step over that line, we transgress the character of God.

Rom. 4:15 "...because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression."

Note that this passage does not say, "Where no law is, there is no sin." Sin takes different sizes and shapes. We cannot step over a line where no line exists. We cannot violate God's character if there is no restriction or probation against doing what we do.

Rom. 5:13 "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

Sin did not take on the flavor of transgression until the law came. There was no express law forbidding something. The law gave a label to sin. The moment we fly in the face of an explicit label against something, we enter into the domain of rebellion. We willfully disobey the revealed will of God.

and sin is lawlessness

Sin is incompatible with the nature of God expressed in His law and Word. Sin is coextensive with lawlessness (Ro 2:29). Sin is by its very nature lawless.

Sin is anything contrary to the character of God. Sin is more than breaking the 10 commandments because it involves lawlessness. It defies the moral essence, character and authority of God. Sin is essentially insubordinate to God; it defies and violates God's standards of righteousness whether incorporated in the Mosaic Law or not.

Principle: We cannot please God except by a new nature because of the absolute character of a perfect God.

Application: Sin is the repudiation of the expressed will of God.

Man cannot please God without a new nature. If man attempts to keep the law without the nature to do so, he will fail. The only thing that can bridle the passions of men is a change of heart. The

fundamental cause of all sin problems and all law breaking is a heart issue.

Education will not change the heart. We can have the finest schools and teachers with the greatest facility but if there is no change in the nature of the students, they will fail because they cannot touch the root of the issue.

Psychology does not change the heart of man. It can change overt behavior patterns and some attitudes but not the fundamental heart of man.

Governmental laws and police enforcement cannot change the heart of man. Legislation against gun laws cannot stop the person who wants to murder. Anarchy mounts and we get nowhere.

Man is not a sinner because he commits sins; he commits sins because he is a sinner (3:8). Our outward sin is an index to our inner nature. Only by new birth do we get a new nature. Only by a new nature can we please God and do His will.

“Lawlessness” is a stronger term than “sin” because it includes the idea of determined disregard of law. Sin is more than a failure to measure up; it is committed refusal to conform to God’s standards. The operating principle of sin is equivalent to refutation of the will of God. It is an assertion against the absolute will of God.

Principle: The operating principle of sin is rebellion against the nature of God.

Application: Sin at root is an issue of rebellion in the will against the nature of God. It has an authority problem. At heart, we are rebels. Our sin is active rebellion against God’s will and a violation of His character.

Sin equals lawlessness or anarchy against God’s will. Anarchy is the idea that “I want my way no matter what anyone thinks about it. I don’t care what God thinks about it.” This is spiritual anarchy.

Is 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

The only true will in the universe is God’s will, yet we set up our puny will in opposition to His will. Since God is absolute, we must come to God on

God’s terms. We cannot come on our terms. We cannot bargain or dicker with God. God is not fluid in His character. He does not adjust His character to accommodate man because His character is infinite and absolute. God will not bargain His standards away.

Some people say, “It makes no difference how you come to God. You can come to God through any religion as long as you are ‘sincere’.” This idea deeply misunderstands the absolute nature of God, “We want our way and we want God to bless our system of values.” No, God only operates according to His way and His will. He does not adjust to our program; we must adjust to His program and standards.

Lawlessness is another way to describe carnality. A carnal person is a believer dominated by his sin capacity. He walks out of phase with God. Sin characterizes the life of a lawless believer. He made a decision to go negative toward God and His Word at some point.

Every sin involves two issues: the will to sin and the act of sin. Confession of sin involves two issues as well: identifying the sin and repentance from the sin. Repentance is the attitude that wants to do the will of God.

A carnal Christian remains in status quo lawlessness until he confesses his sin. That means he is outside the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that makes him free. He is outside the law of spirituality (Ro 8:2-4). Sins such as jealousy, hatred, bitterness, and envy catapult him out of fellowship. As long as these sins remain unconfessed, he is in a state of lawlessness. The Holy Spirit no longer controls his life.

If the carnal Christian does good, it is by operation bootstraps. It is not a ‘good’ that comes from God. He previously removed himself from the law of spirituality by his carnality. He can do nothing to get it back except throw himself on the cross of Christ. He did something to lose his spirituality but he can do nothing to get it back. He cannot agonize in the closet, do good works, and become maudlin or sentimental to get it back. That violates the provision of God’s grace in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality and carnality are mutually exclusive just as light and darkness are mutually exclusive.

God is completely incompatible with darkness. There is no such thing as being partially spiritual because of the absoluteness of God's character. Committing one sin is revolt against the God of light in whom is no darkness whatever (1:5).

Ps 119:34 "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. **35** Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.

Rom. 7:22 "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23** But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **24** O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

1 John 3:5

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin."

There are two purposes for the coming of Christ into the world:

- To take away sins (3:4-6)
- To destroy the works of the devil (3:7,8)

And you know

John's readers knew something about the purpose of Christ's coming; they did not assume it. The Greek says that they came to a settled knowledge of this. There is no room for speculation about the subject of salvation.

that He was manifested

John appeals to something that his readers understood – the historic fact of the incarnation. The phrase "He was manifested" refers to the coming of Jesus into the world from eternity. Jesus' coming assumes His preexistence. He came from the glory he had with the Father.

John 3:17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

John 5:37 "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither

heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form."

John 8:18 "I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

1 John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Principle: Any sin that a Christian commits is unwarranted because of the wonderful work of Christ on the cross.

Application: Many Christians do not appreciate the price that Jesus paid for their sin. The commission and mission of Christ were for the removal of our sin. He paid the price of death as a sinless sacrifice on the cross so we could have a relationship with God.

By Christ's work on the cross, He saved us from the penalty of sin. Later, by His work as the ascended and seated Son of God on the Throne, He is saving us from the power of sin (He 7:24). Finally, by His return, He will save us from the very presence of sin. Any exercise of sin by the Christian is unwarranted in light of the great price that Jesus paid. Our lives should correspond to the purpose of His work and manifested character because of the magnitude of His wonderful work on the cross.

2 Tim. 1:10 "...but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..."

Heb. 9:26 "...He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

to take away our sins,

The words "take away" mean to lift, carry, take up or away, remove. Jesus paid the price for our guilt. He took away the penalty for our sins.

His coming into the world has a purpose. Jesus came into the world manifested as a man with the mission and commission to take away our sins.

John 1:29 "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The

Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Heb. 10:12 "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God..."

and in Him there is no sin

Jesus Christ was sinless. He did not possess a sinful nature. Sin is incompatible with relationship to Him. He and He alone was able to pay for our sins due to His sinless life. No one ever found one iota of sin in the Son of God. He is a sinless, spotless, stainless Savior.

John 8:46 "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

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

1 Peter 1:19 "...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

1 Peter 2:22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth..."

Principle: The Christian is completely free from the guilt of his sin.

Application: Jesus took our sins so far away that we will never face them again. Jesus removed all guilt from us. All guilt is gone. Our record is completely clean before God. Sins should never haunt us or hound us again.

Ps 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Isaiah 44:22 "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

Micah 7:19 "He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea."

Acts 13:38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all

things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Gal. 1:3 "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Eph. 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..."

Heb. 1:3 "...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..."

Heb. 10:17 "...then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Heb. 9:27 "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

1 Peter 2:24 "...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed."

1 John 3:6

"Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him."

This verse says that an abiding Christian "does not sin." Verse nine says that he "cannot sin." Previous statements in 1 John say that Christians do sin (1:6,8,10; 2:1,2). These contrasting statements are difficult to resolve no matter what doctrinal position one holds.

Note 3 three difficult statements to interpret:

- "Whoever abides in Him does not sin" (3:6)
- "He who sins is of the devil" (3:8)
- "Whoever has been born of God does not sin" (3:9)

Whoever abides in Him does not sin.

Some people believe that the phrase “does not sin” refers to habitually sin as a way of life. The Greek present tense does not support this interpretation without the backing of other words that may convey that meaning. John’s point is simply that sin and God are incompatible. The believer who “abides in Him” is a Christian in fellowship or filled with the Spirit.

The phrases “whoever commits sin” (3:4) and “whoever abides in Him” are in sharp contrast. There is a clear difference in opponents. There are those who are morally indifferent and those who recognize the impact of sin on our fellowship with the Lord.

Principle: The believer cannot sin while the Holy Spirit controls him.

Application: As long as the Holy Spirit controls us, we cannot sin. The only way we can sin is to grab the reigns of our lives away from the Holy Spirit. Somewhere along the line we chose to go independent from God. Depending on the Holy Spirit is dependency on God.

Some Christians believe that if they sin that they are not genuine believers. Everyone discovers after they receive Christ that they are not perfect. Some attempt to become Christians over and over only to find that they still sin. Some give up on the Christian life.

The Bible does not teach that a Christian can reach a state of sinless perfection on earth. Christians are not sinless but they sin less. The new nature goes to war against the old nature. The new nature is completely free of sin while the old nature is nothing but sinful. The key to victory in the Christian life is to establish momentum where the new nature rises in ascendancy and the old nature falls in “descendancy”.

Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him

Those who see and know the Lord in fellowship do not produce sin. Sinning is not part and parcel of abiding in Him. Whenever we sin we do not reflect fellowship with the Lord. This does not mean that the Christian is sinless (1:8,10; 2:1,2) but that sin is abnormal to the Christian life.

Gal. 5:16 “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For

the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

Rom. 7:20 “Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Notice that this does not say, “Whosoever commits a sin has not seen Him, nor known Him.” No one can possibly detect faith in someone else’s heart. None of us can sit in judgment on someone else.

Principle: Life in the Spirit excludes the life controlled by the believer.

Application: Walking with God and living in sin are mutually exclusive. Spirituality is an absolute. As long as the Holy Spirit fills (controls) the Christian, he lives in the will of God and according to the character of God. If there is one sin in the life of a believer, the Holy Spirit no longer controls his life; he controls his life. Life under control of the Holy Spirit excludes the life controlled by the believer.

Gal. 2:19 “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Jesus is completely free from sin. This is an argument from the material cause of our salvation. Since Christ is perfectly pure and came to take away sins, anyone who genuinely believes in Him does not give himself to sin.

A child of God breaks fellowship with God when he sins. He then stays out of fellowship until he confesses that sin and allows the Holy Spirit to take control of his life again. During the time of his broken fellowship his Lawyer, Jesus Christ the righteous one, defense his case before the Father (2:1,2). Jesus represents all his affairs before the Father. The Father may have to discipline him to put the believer back into phase with Himself. If he is a true believer he cannot sin with impunity.

Rom. 6:1 “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”

1 John 3:7

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

Verses 7 and 8 strongly suggest that antichrists confused sin and righteousness. Maybe the antichrists taught that it was okay to continue to sin while claiming fellowship with God.

Little children,

By calling out to his readers as “little children,” John makes a direct application to his previous point (3:5,6).

let no one deceive you.

The Greek indicates that John’s readers were to stop the deception that was already in process. This also indicates the severity of satanic error to which they were susceptible.

John warned his readers in chapter two about the “antichrists” who confused the distinction between sin and righteousness. Now he warns them again about the importance of consistency in the faith. Genuine righteousness springs from a righteous nature. Sin finds its origin in the Devil.

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

This word for “deceive” is the same word used in 2:26. The word means to lead astray. Evidently the antichrists led some of John’s readers astray from a correct view of the nature of God in relation to His righteousness.

He who practices righteousness is righteous,

The genuine believer in fellowship reflects righteousness beyond himself. He is far more than mere profession. He has the life of God in him. The life of God in the believer reflects itself in righteousness produced by God. There is a close connection between conduct and character. Character is the foundation of life and deeds.

John does not say that the practice of righteousness makes one righteous. Rather, righteous conduct is a sign of righteous character.

just as He is righteous

A believer in fellowship always reflects the source where he derived his righteousness – the Son of God. He reflects the nature of Christ. He behaves like Him because he is from Him.

The words “just as” mean precisely as. The phrase reads, “Just precisely as that One is righteous.” These words do not indicate that believers exercise righteousness to the same extent as Jesus did but in the same manner as He did. Genuine positional or judicial righteousness always shows itself in righteous conduct. Genuine righteousness springs from a righteous nature.

Just as Jesus did not become righteous by doing, so the believer does not become righteous by doing. Jesus was eternally and immutably righteous so He manifested Himself as such in the world. Believers manifest the righteousness they have in Christ because of their life in Christ. There is a mighty big difference between those who imitate the righteousness of Christ and those complimentary to it

Principle: The believer’s conduct manifests his relationship with God.

Application: Satan is ever on the lookout for gullible believers. Untaught Christians are particularly susceptible to deception from Satan when it comes to righteousness.

Every believer possesses two kinds of righteousness. Jesus declares the believer to be as righteous as He is righteous at the moment of personal trust in the cross to forgive sin. That is a judicial righteousness. The second righteousness is a righteousness that flows out of our fellowship with the Lord (Ph 1:9-11). The Holy Spirit produces the latter righteousness. There is no way that a person can fellowship with God and not produce experiential righteousness.

Gal. 5:25 “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

He that lives righteously demonstrates that he is righteous. He resembles the One with whom he fellowships. There is a self-righteousness that does not come from Jesus Christ. It is simply a pious front to deceive others into thinking that it is real. John says in effect, “Don’t let them fool you; it

isn't real. They are phony having no relationship with Jesus Christ."

For someone to say, "I am a Christian," and live like the Devil, just kids himself. This is self-deception. No one would believe them. People believe what they see, "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say."

A holy God cannot tolerate sin in the slightest degree. That is why we need God's righteousness to go to heaven (Ro 3:22; 4:5; 5:17; 10:3; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ph 3:7,9; He 11:7). This is not a human righteousness but the righteousness of God.

There is no righteousness adequate enough found in us. Our righteousness is as filthy rags (Is. 64:6). Righteousness by operation bootstraps is not the righteousness of God. Anything but God's righteousness is just religious veneer. When we come to the end of life's short day, only God's righteousness will be acceptable to Him, not our man-made righteousness. My righteousness is irrelevant and incidental.

1 John 3:8

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

Divine righteousness originates from having the nature of God. It is impossible to sin from the origin of our divine nature. On the other hand, sin derives from the Devil. Thus, two families, the family of Satan and the family of God, reflect the nature of their father.

He who sins is of the devil,

John makes an unqualified flat statement that "he who sins is of the devil." Cain was of "that wicked one" and killed his brother (3:12). That is because he was a child of the Devil (3:10). He acted like the Devil because his behavior reflected whom his father was.

All sin has its ultimate origin in Satan. God originally created Lucifer, son of the morning, but he became Satan (Is 14:12-14; Ezek 24:12-17). The Devil is the source of all sin.

Principle: We can trace the source of all sin to Satan.

Application: The Devil formulated the concept of sin. All his children are cornered, corrupted and controlled by him. He is the spiritual source of those who commit sin. The practice of sin was originated and introduced into the human race by the devil, thus, unregenerate men are his children, not merely because they imitate him, but because they are indwelt by the principle of sin of which he is the source. Non-Christians belong to Satan and give him their allegiance.

It is natural for a son to act like his father. A natural person is someone born but once. He may be cultured, religious, refined, a good citizen, educated and even nice but he is in the Devil's family.

Behind all evil today is a malevolent being who constantly undermines God and His will for the world. He subverts God in every way he can. We constantly run into the supernatural "works" of Satan. He is a force that both Christian and non-Christian must reckon with.

Eph. 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

Satan committed the first sin and he continues to practice sin. He introduced sin into the universe. When we take part in sin, we share in satanic activity. Satan is the spiritual force behind all sin. He introduced sin into the human race and he sustains its use. He was the first sinner. Sinners today are his posterity (John 8:44).

The instant Lucifer rebelled against God, he introduced autonomy from God into the universe. He falsely slanders the righteous character of God from that point. He is not subject to reform or improvement.

Principle: When we sin, we enter into rebellion and autonomy from God.

Application: God did not create the Devil; He created Lucifer, the Day Star (or, light bearer). The Devil did not always exist. Lucifer became the

Devil when he sinned. Before he fell he had authority over all angels in the universe. He was their commander-in-chief. He was the first angel or chief angel (the archangel). Michael became the archangel when Lucifer fell (Ju 9).

We find the story of how Lucifer turned Devil in Isaiah 14. The Devil declares five "I wills" in this chapter. This is his declaration of independence from God, of spiritual anarchy. By becoming autonomous from God, he set in motion a system of revolution against God. His aim was to displace God as a center of worship. He became a law unto himself. Whoever commits sin goes independent from God just like Satan. Sin is autonomy and independence from God, "I don't need God. I'll run my own life. I do not need God for a crutch."

Rom. 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The Devil murders, lies and steals (John 10:10). That is the sum of his modus operandi. These are the systems by which the Devil undermines people. He lies to people to get them to believe that they can go independent from God - "I did it my way." He brings confusion and darkness into the thinking of mankind. That is why young people buy into his lies about drugs and free sex. His goal is always the same - get people to ignore God and put Christianity out on the periphery of things. Get them to lie and cheat or do anything that they can get away with. This always ends in destruction.

John 8:34 "Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.'"

Satan introduced Adam and Eve to sin (Ge 3:1f). He beguiled Adam and Eve (Re 12:9). Their first child became a murderer. There is an army of murderers roaming the streets of the major cities of the world. Murder is latent in the hearts of all men. This is the manifestation of the "children of wrath" (Ep 2:1-3).

Non-Christians tell lies as easily as the truth. They tell white lies and pink lies. That is because their father was a liar and the father of it (John 8:44). They do his will. It is just natural for them; it is part and parcel of their family heritage.

John 13:2 "And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him... 27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'"

Acts 5:3 "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?'"

2 Cor. 11:3 "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Satan is in the business of slandering the saints (Re 12:9,10). He did this to Job (Job 1). Slander sows suspicion. It puts a question mark in our minds about someone. There are always those who welcome gossip. Both those who gossip and those who listen to it do Satan's work.

James 4:7 "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, We found the first purpose for His first coming in 3:5. He came to deal with the sin question.

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

1 Tim. 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

2 Tim. 1:10 "...but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..."

The second purpose of the coming of the Son of God to earth was to destroy the works of the Devil. Jesus made an appearance in the world to destroy the works of the Devil. This is one of the purposes of the incarnation.

Principle: Jesus came to free us from the works of Satan.

Application: Jesus came to free us from the bondage of Satan, the sin capacity and individual acts of sin. The Devil is a powerful foe. It took the

work of the Lord Jesus on the cross to defeat him. People love to dismiss him as a fictitious person, the figment of someone's imagination.

Heb. 2:14 "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same [flesh and blood], that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The Devil is the slanderer of believers for that is what the name means. Jesus destroyed his works so that believers might escape his tyranny.

that He might destroy the works of the devil

The word "works" indicates the apparent accomplishments and achievements of the world system, the spurious infernal achievements of a blasphemer. The Devil's works are diverse. He is the purveyor of "evil deeds" (John 3:19), "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ep 5:11), "wicked works" (Col. 1:21) and "dead works" (He 9:14).

The word "destroy" conveys the ideas of loose, dissolve, disintegrate. The idea is to destroy or reduce it to ruin by tearing down or breaking into pieces. The Devil accuses Christians before the Father but Jesus came to dissolve this work of blaming Christians. When we slander others, we do the Devil's work. Christ will destroy that work. That is the future work of Christ. His past work against the Devil destroyed his world system in principle. Satan is not cast down yet.

The last book of the Bible gives the doom of the Devil. That is why he hates the book of Revelation. It tells of the defeat of the Devil, how it will all end for him and his followers. That is why he sets forth the propaganda that you cannot understand the book of Revelation.

Rev. 12:7 "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon [the Devil]; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom

of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.'"

Principle: The purpose of Christ's first coming was to dissolve the works of Satan.

Application: The child will inevitably be like his parent. Believers will be like God and unbelievers will be like Satan.

Vital relationship with Christ provides a new nature that counteracts sin in our lives. The divine nature in the believer inspires him to please the Lord. New birth generates a new orientation to life. This inner renewed entity cannot sin. It is contrary to its very nature.

Our new life in Christ does not come from religion or morality. The Devil attempts to get his followers to be righteous without God. It springs from new life. Therefore, the new nature cannot commit an act of sin. Inhibition to sin comes from a new capacity implanted by God. This seminal principle orients to an entirely different domain than our sin capacity. Our old nature can commit sin and that is why we must confess sin as Christians (1 John 1:9).

1 John 3:9

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."

We come today to one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to interpret, regardless of the theological viewpoint one may hold. The problem phrase is "and he cannot sin."

Some teach that it is possible for a Christian to reach a point of sinless perfection where he does not sin again. It is possible from this view not to commit even one act of sin. John already argued against this view in 1:6,8,10; 2:1-2.

Others teach that this verse refers to only willful sins. A Christian cannot commit deliberate sins. He might slide into sin unintentionally but he cannot go into sin deliberately. Neither of these two interpretations is true to this text.

Whoever has been born of God

John uses the term “born” metaphorically. It is God conferring upon believers His own nature. He imparts spiritual life at the point of conversion (John 3:3, 5-7; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). We can translate “has been born” to beget, engender, bring forth, produce.

1 John 5:1 “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.”

The words “has been born” are in the Greek perfect tense and indicate that spiritual birth occurred in the past with the results continuing on. We receive a divine nature at the point of salvation that continues with us until we go to glory.

Principle: God imparts the principle of eternal life into us at the point of salvation.

Application: Christians are the spiritual offspring of God (Ro 4:16,18; 9:8) by promise (Ga 3:29). The principle of spiritual life imparted to the believer abides in him forever, without the possibility of extinction. God’s “seed” is God’s nature or capacity implanted into the believer at salvation (2:29; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). It is the principle of life that God imparted at salvation.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

1 Peter 1:23 “...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”

2 Peter 1:4 “...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

does not sin,

The Greek indicates a universal negative in the phrase “does not sin.” No one with a divine nature can sin. The new nature is a perfect creation (Ep 2:24; Col. 3:10) by God at the point of salvation.

Principle: The divine nature in the believer is incapable of sinning.

Application: A child shares the nature of his parent. When a child begins to demonstrate certain characteristics of his parents, then it becomes manifest what his parents are like. We get our spiritual nature from God in its entirety.

At the point of salvation we get a spiritual nature or divine nature. This nature is perfect. We cannot alter or lose it. We cannot lose the old nature or the new nature for that matter. We have the “seed” of God in us – eternal life. Once God gives us eternal life it is unalterable – unforfeitable and inextinguishable.

The old nature can do nothing but sin; the new nature cannot sin. This makes for a titanic tug of war between these two natures. There is no peaceful coexistence between them. They cannot get along together because they are polar opposites.

Rom. 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”

Gal. 5:17 “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

for His seed

The Greek word for “seed” is semen. This word is also the source for our English word “semen.” “Seed” carries the idea of descendants, children, posterity. The idea in this verse is the beginning or germ of new life planted by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The sperm carries the hereditary characteristic and life principle of the parent. This resides continuously in the child of God.

remains in him;

The word "remains" conveys the idea of permanence. The believer will never lose God's nature that resides in him once he becomes a Christian. Eternal life in the believer can never be reversed. As we cannot cease from existing as a human being and become a cow, neither can we lose our new nature or trade it in for a new one.

Principle: The Christian cannot lose his salvation once he becomes a Christian.

Application: Can a Christian lose his salvation? Once we receive Christ as Savior, we cannot lose our salvation because we hold to the same status quo before the Father as Jesus holds. Positionally, we are perfect before the Father with Christ's righteousness and Christ's eternal life. These are permanent and can never be lost for any reason (Ro 8:31-39).

John 10:28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

Rom. 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..."

A Christian is still a Christian even though he disowns the Lord. The Bible assumes the possibility that a Christian might deny the Lord at some point in his life. Even though we deny Him, He will not deny us. He cannot go back on His promises. He can deny us reward (2 Tim. 2:12) but He cannot deny us salvation.

2 Tim. 2:13 "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

We stay in the family in which we were born during our stay on earth. We are in that family to stay whether we ever see them again or not. Once we believe in Jesus Christ, God puts us into His family forever. He gives us an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4,5) as part of His family.

God Himself sovereignly keeps our salvation for us:

Jude 24 "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with

exceeding joy, 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen."

The Holy Spirit seals the salvation for every Christian so that no one can break that seal. He seals us until we meet the Lord face to face.

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

Eph. 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

There is nothing you can do nor anyone else can do to lose your salvation. The onus is upon God completely to save your soul once you believe in Christ. Why try to keep something you already possess? Doing so distorts our walk with the Lord.

and he cannot sin,

This inability of the Christian sinning is from the source of his divine capacity, not his human capacity or "flesh." God's nature that resides in the believer cannot sin one iota. That is, our new nature cannot sin.

because he has been born of God

The child shares the nature of his parent. The child of God shares the nature of God. That nature cannot sin even a little. The idea of "not practicing sin" is completely alien to John's thought in this verse.

2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things [not most things] have become new."

John loves stark contrasts. All sin finds its origin in the Devil (1 John 3:8) and not from the new nature. The child of God cannot sin from his divine nature. His Parent is sinless so the divine nature is sinless. The old nature or capacity is nothing but satanic. It springs from his unregenerate nature, the sin capacity.

Rom. 7:17 "But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin [the sin nature or capacity] that dwells in me."

Principle: Spirituality is an absolute.

Application: Spirituality is an absolute. The filling of the Holy Spirit or control of the Holy Spirit over our lives is an absolute. The carnal Christian walks in darkness but the spiritual Christian walks in the light [God's absolute perfection (1:5-7)].

The flesh can do nothing but sin. It cannot profit the Christian in any way. The flesh is a dynamic entity. It will not lay dormant.

Rom. 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

The new nature loves, forgives, is full of compassion and mercy and is kind. The old nature may be refined and cultured but nevertheless it is full of self. It cannot be converted, cured or saved. All of us have a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in us.

If we can label the differences between the sin capacity and the divine capacity, we are on our way to conquest in the Christian life. Our desire to stick up for ourselves or to have our own way is the operation of the flesh. It is not easy to lead these things to the cross because we want to be the center of things.

A spiritual Christian labels these things as sin. He keeps his spiritual sensibilities tender toward the Lord. He can detect right and wrong, black and white. When we step out of fellowship with the Lord and allow our sin capacity to dominate us, our spiritual sensibilities become calloused.

Both a pig and a sheep can fall into a mud hole. The pig remains perfectly content in the mud because it is his nature to roll in the mud. The sheep is not content to roll in the mud because it is contrary to her nature. She wants out as quickly as possible because living in mud is contrary to her nature. If a believer truly possesses a divine nature, she will be uncomfortable in sin because it is contrary to her nature.

Sin can enslave a genuine Christian but he will never be comfortable under the domination of sin. In principle, Jesus defeated the reign of sin. That is the believer's privilege and power. He has a new ruling principle that motivates and inspires him. The needle in the compass may turn from its

magnetic pole for a moment but it always comes back to the pole.

Gen. 39:9 "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

No Christian is sinlessly perfect. He does have a perfect nature given to him at his spiritual birth but he cannot sin with that nature. While he abides in Christ through his divine nature he cannot sin. The moment he sins, it is from his old nature.

A fish has the nature of a fish and a bird the nature of a bird. The fish does not fly in the air and the bird does not swim in the water. The problem with the believer is that he has two natures, a fish/bird nature. All the time he sins he lives according to his fallen nature, he is out of fellowship with the Lord.

Whenever he allows the Holy Spirit to control his life, his divine nature is in the ascendancy. He cannot commit sin while controlled by the Spirit. Each Christian possesses a nature that can sin and a nature that cannot sin. It all revolves around his choice. In principle, the believer cannot sin with his divine nature. In practice, he can sin with his sin capacity. There is no such thing as "partial" spirituality. Either we are spiritual or we are not. Spirituality is an either/or issue.

1 John 3:10

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother."

In this

The words "in this" refer not only to the previous discussion about the sin nature and the divine nature but also bridges to the next section (3:11-24).

The child of God has the divine nature at the core of his being. This nature directs his orientation to life. The non-Christian displays his true nature through sin and man-made righteousness but the Christian cannot. The Christian cannot sin from the source of his divine nature because sin and God are mutually exclusive.

Principle: A tree is known by its fruit.

Application: Only by fellowship with the Lord can we manifest the reality of Christianity to a lost and dying world. If we have hatred toward others or if we resent them, we cannot manifest the filling of the Spirit. The world cannot see the power of God in us because our sin blinds their minds to the reality of God's work in our lives. There is no difference between our behavior pattern and that of a non-Christian in this case. Religious non-Christians behave morally.

The Christian is the letter that God writes to the world. Fellowship with God cannot but manifest itself to the world. He writes this letter not in the mere dead words of the law but in the power of the Spirit.

2 Cor. 3:2 "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."

the children of God and the children of the devil

We find only two classes of people in the world – the children of God and the children of the Devil. John distinguishes between God's children and the children of the Devil. There is a very clear distinction between them.

All non-Christians are the children of Devil. The unbeliever is under the absolute control of his sin capacity. He does not possess a divine capacity so he cannot produce anything from God.

The one thing that the believer has that distinguishes him from non-Christians is his divine nature, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling in itself is not enough; he must also allow the Holy Spirit to control or fill him. The Christian receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. God never commands him to be indwelt with the Spirit. However, God does command the believer to be filled with the Spirit (Ep 5:18).

The whole thrust of verse 10 is to show how to distinguish between absolutes. Christians can imitate the children of the Devil or they can produce the character of Christ. The characteristics of the unbeliever are one thing and the characteristics of God are another.

Principle: The Christian and the non-Christian have two different natures that produce two different results.

Application: Earlier in the chapter John said, "it does not appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2) yet in this passage he says that the children of God are "manifest." It is already abundantly clear what a Christian in fellowship is. He stands in stark contrast to what the world stands for.

Not all children of the Devil sin crudely. Some of them sin in sophisticated ways. Not all of them are violent or openly immoral. Some of them are very religious and moral. The Devil's ministers are "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14). They come with culture and high morality draped in religion. Jesus said to some of the most religious people of his day that they were of their father the Devil (John 8:39-47). Jesus told a religious leader that he needed to be "born again" (John 3:3,7).

We do not mean by this to project the idea that "the children of God" are better than non-Christians. Our sin capacity is just as bad as any non-Christian's sin capacity. We are far from perfect except for our judicial perfection in Christ.

A child of the Devil might pray on a regular basis and attend church every Sunday. They can clean up the exterior of their lives so that they appear to be right. They have a form of righteousness but not the righteousness of God.

The Devil always sows his people among God's people. That is why we have tares with wheat. It is important to make a distinction between wheat and tares, true believers and the fakers (Matt. 13:36-39).

A believer down on fellow Christians does not love according to God's standard of loving. He hates or despises his brother. He commits mental homicide. A person controlled by the Holy Spirit acts like the Spirit who produced a new nature in him.

Look at your life. If you hate someone, if you are bitter toward them, if you resent them, you are definitely 100% carnal. When our sin capacity controls us we appear no different than the non-Christian. We may make respectable noises. We may look pious or spiritual but we are out of fellowship. We might give generously and witness continuously but we are out of fellowship. We are

no different from the non-Christian except that we possess eternal life.

are manifest:

The word “manifest” means open to sight, visible, evident. The evidence is plain to see. It is evident to all. It is patently easy for anyone who wants to examine the evidence. The presence or absence of sin capacity or the divine capacity makes it apparent in which domain we live.

The Christian living under the control of his sin capacity manifests his true authority – himself. He conceals the fact that his old nature is in the ascendancy. The Christian in fellowship manifests a different righteousness, a righteousness that produces love for his brother.

A child of the Devil reveals his true nature in sin, religion and human righteousness. We can identify his true relationship by this. He lives and walks according to his satanic worldview.

Matt. 23:15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

Acts 13:10 “...and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?’”

Eph. 2:1 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Principle: The filling of the indwelling Holy Spirit is the one manifestation of fellowship with God.

Application: Man is a container for he does not have capacity of divine life within himself. He needs God to fill that container with His divine nature. This gives him capacity to fellowship with God. As Augustine said, “Man is restless until he finds his rest in You”. God made man for Himself. Pascal said that every man has a God-shaped vacuum that only God can fill.

The unbeliever produces not only sins but also human righteousness with his sin capacity. It is difficult to distinguish between a non-Christian who produces human righteousness and a believer out of fellowship manufacturing human righteousness.

What makes a Spirit filled believer different from non-Christians producing human righteousness and carnal Christians producing human righteousness? If non-Christians have righteous behavior patterns what makes the child of God different? It isn’t a new smile on our face although that might be a tertiary effect.

There is only one thing that makes a difference and that is that the Christian has the indwelling Holy Spirit who manifests Himself through us when He controls our lives. If He does not control our lives, no one can see Him in our lives. When the Holy Spirit controls our lives He produces the character of Christ in us that pivots around divine, self-sacrificing love.

Rom. 5:5 “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God,

“Whoever” here refers to the non-Christian. The Greek phrase “of God” means that a person without divine righteousness does not find his source in God. His source for righteousness is in his sin capacity. He finds his source is in the relative righteousness of man. We can never trace sin to God because God is absolute.

Righteousness involves right relationship with God. Fellowship with God rests on what is right with God. Children of God bear characteristic marks that stamp their true nature. Anyone who does not manifest standards of righteousness does not reveal his true nature. A believer in fellowship produces the very character of Christ.

nor is he who does not love his brother

The “he” here is the believer out of fellowship who manifests characteristics like the non-Christian. He hates and despises his fellow believer. This is a manifestation of an unbeliever.

Righteousness is too vague so John specifies what he means by righteousness – loving a brother. Love is the appropriate manifestation of the divine nature. The absence of manifestation of righteousness indicates a person not walking with God in fellowship. A loveless believer cannot commune with God who in His very essence is love.

Not loving our brother is a specific case of not manifesting divine righteousness. Absence of love for fellow Christians is an indication of absence of fellowship with God. An important manifestation of fellowship with God is love of fellow Christians.

Gal. 5:14 “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ **15** But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

Principle: We can distinguish between a Christian and a non-Christian by whether they have genuine fellowship with God or not.

Application: There is a method for determining whether we operate out of our sin capacity or out of our divine capacity. The inner nature of the divine “seed” (3:9) will manifest itself in “righteousness” and “love.” The essence of righteousness [fellowship with God] manifests itself in love. Love is the distinct badge of being a believer. This is what decisively distinguishes between a believer and an unbeliever.

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

This means that you love Christians who love you and you love Christians who do not love you. You love the Christians who are nice and easy to get along with. You love those who communicate with you and you love those who do not communicate with you.

If we love fellow Christians, we take care how we treat them. If someone says that he loves his fellow Christian at church but steals from him at work, he does not love his brother. There is a correspondence between what we say about love and what we do with love.

1 John 2:9 “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness [out of fellowship with God] until now.”

We know people who walk with God by their righteous fellowship with God and their love for fellow Christians. Only God can give us true righteousness and love. He fills the container called the believer with the dynamics of who He is.

Sin does not appeal to the Christian in fellowship like it once did. He now has a burr in his saddle when he sins. He does not want to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ep 4:30). Peace leaves his soul when he steps out of fellowship with God. He cannot leave it unresolved. He confesses his sin immediately (1:9).

The non-Christian has no capacity to do the righteousness of God because he does not possess a divine nature or capacity. He may do good in a relative sense according to how men measure goodness. A genuine believer can do righteousness acceptable to God’s standard of righteousness. He acts according to God’s righteousness imputed to him. This is a God-produced righteousness, not a man-made righteousness. After God imputes His righteousness to the believer, He can then move through that new nature to produce His righteousness according to His norms.

The love of God will produce love through the child of God when the child of God walks in fellowship with the Son of God. Man without God is essentially selfish. Unselfish love manifests God’s self-sacrificing love. Unselfish love proves that a believer is in fellowship with God.

1 John 3:11

“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another...”

John sets forth a test of whether a believer is in fellowship in verses 7-11. In verses 11-24, he views the Christian life as divine sonship. He employs love again as a test of a person who is a genuine son.

John continues his stark contrast between the family of God and the family of Satan in verses 11 and 12. Cain is representative of the family of

Satan and Christ is representative of the family of God.

For

“For” explains the basis on which the statement of the previous verse leans. John offers evidence substantiating the declaration of 3:10b, “Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” God’s people love God’s people. The aim of this epistle is to help John’s readers understand the nature of God’s love.

this is the message

The only other occurrence of the noun “message” in the New Testament occurs in 1:5. That message has to do with “fellowship” with God. The message here is that we “should love one another” which is a manifestation of fellowship. This is a message to saints who wish to have fellowship with God on an ongoing basis.

that you heard from the beginning,

“Heard from the beginning” is the beginning of the proclamation of salvation to John’s readers. John makes it abundantly clear that his audience is Christian by this statement. This also draws attention to the divine nature of verse 9. The principle of love goes back to a family issue, the family of God. Love is a reflection of the divine nature. Love proves life. The test of fellowship lies in love, not in religion, church attendance or breast-beating.

that we should love one another

The words “love one another” occur 5 times in this epistle. The word “love” in its various forms occurs 46 times. Believers should love their own kind. The words “one another” mean another of the same kind. Spiritual birth and the divine nature came in the same package; therefore, love is no option for the believer. If God generated Christians into one family, it is reasonable that they would love people of their own kind.

Principle: The manifestation of love is the outcome of being a member of the family of God.

Application: The origin of life is the conversion of a Christian. The gospel puts believers into one family. It unites them in Christ as members of His family. This should generate family love, Christ’s love within one another.

Fellowship with God [righteousness] is inseparable from love. The God of light is also the God of love. Knowing this God of love enables us to love beyond a human love.

Loving some member of the family of God is not easy but God wants us to love unloving Christians. You may have heard the following jingle that reveals the true state of love among some believers today,

“To dwell above with the saints we love,
Oh, that will be grace and glory.
But to live below the saints we know,
Well, that’s another story.”

Someone has said, “I love mankind, it is just people I can’t stand.” No, loving fellow Christians in the face of irritation is a true test of love from the divine nature. Christians should love one another because they have a common origin – the family of God.

As Nelson drew his ship to battle against the Dutch fleet, two of his English officers were quarrelling. He flung himself between them and pointing to the ships of Holland said, “Gentlemen, there are your enemies!”

Our enemies are not fellow Christians.

1 John 3:12

“...not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”

John in this verse sets forth two representatives of two different spiritual families: the family of God and the family of Satan. Cain represents the family of Satan and Abel represents the family of God. These families stand in stark contrast to one another.

not as Cain

John says what love is not before he says what love is. It is not the attitude and action that Cain had toward Abel (Ge 4:8), it is Cain’s jealous resentment toward his brother’s more acceptable sacrifice that drove him to kill Abel (Ge 4:1-7). Cain was religious but lost. He was lost because his sacrifice was not acceptable to God.

who was of the wicked one

The origin of Cain's sin came from Satan; it came out of his spiritual relationship with Satan. The word "of" means origin, source. The source of Cain's behavior is in the Devil. Cain did not become a child of the Devil by murdering his brother. He murdered his brother because he was a child of the Devil. His spiritual birth was of the Devil (John 3:8).

Cain's murderous attitude came out of his sense of failure before God. He viewed Abel as a rival in spiritual things. All this finds its source in Satan. As Cain came out of the family of Satan so he demonstrates that relationship by his act of rejecting God's system of payment for sin – a blood sacrifice.

and murdered his brother.

Cain was a physical brother to Abel but not a spiritual brother. They came from two different spiritual families. Cain murdered his brother for spiritual reasons.

Principle: Actions always arise out of either the sin nature or the divine nature, either from Satan or from God.

Application: What is the origin of spiritual rebellion? It does not begin in man. Love springs from God and hate originates in the Devil. If you are in the grip of hate, it has a satanic source.

Just as Satan entered the heart of Judas at the institution of the Lord's Supper to betray Jesus, so Satan enters our heart when we hate Christians. Satan entered Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, two Christians, to lie and cheat (Acts 5:3). It all begins with that sinister being whose purpose is to undermine the things of God.

The unregenerate person remains under the influence of Satan. This was our course of life before we became Christians. We rejected salvation by grace. Most non-Christians do not have a clue that this is the case with them.

Eph. 2:1 "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of

the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

This is why non-Christians hate the confidence and conviction of believers who know where they stand with God. They hate the grace concept because it violates their self-trust. Non-Christians often love religion and morality but religion and morality without the grace of Christ. They hold great disdain and contempt for the gospel message. A skunk by any other name still smells. We can squirt perfume on him from now till doomsday but he will still smell. No label or perfume of religion or morality will help the non-Christian find acceptance with God.

Pride often seeks to diminish those to whom we compare ourselves. Others make us feel small so we seek to cut them down a notch or two. As Abel threatened Cain, so also Christians threaten other Christians they deem more able, more talented, or gifted.

Does your heart burn in anger toward another Christian? You just cannot stand him. Why don't you call it what it is? Hatred. Hatred originated in the Devil. May God draw our hearts toward Him and His love.

And why did he murder him?

Cain did not kill his brother because he was a bad person. He killed him because of the nature of his sacrifice to God. Abel's sacrifice was a sacrifice of grace while Cain's sacrifice was a sacrifice of works. Cain hated the grace concept.

Cain did more than murder his brother – he slaughtered him. The Greek often uses the word "murder" for ritual slaying. Literally, it means to cut the throat. Sometimes the Greek uses this term for slaughtering a goat. This is a grisly picture of holding Abel's head back to cut his throat and jugular vein. Cain butchered his brother. It is a violent term for putting to death by violence. This is a very strong term for fratricide.

Cain said to God in effect, "You want a blood sacrifice, do you? I will give you one – I'll shed the blood of my brother as a ritual sacrifice. There, how do like your bloody sacrifice now?" Cain hated God's system of blood sacrifice because it rests on salvation by grace. He wanted to bring the work of his own hands, the fruit of the field.

He believed in salvation by personal merit and good works.

Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous

The word "because" means on account of. This is the reason Cain killed Abel. A wicked person in nature hates a person who is righteous before God. Cain hated Abel's relationship to God. He hated his method of salvation by blood and, therefore, by grace. Abel's sacrifice by grace stood in stark contrast to Cain's sacrifice by the work of his own hands.

Cain's murder of Abel proved the true family to which he belonged. He was under the control of Satan rather than God. The motive behind Cain's murder was astounding. He hated his brother's righteous approach to God! He could not bear the comparison between himself and his brother's approach to God. It goaded him into someone unimaginable.

Cain hated what Abel represented. Abel's sacrifice represented grace. Cain's sacrifice represented works. Cain believed that a person could work his way into acceptance with God by merit. These two brothers came from the same physical family and the same environment but ended in two different outcomes.

Cain is a picture of John's enemies who seceded from the assembly of believers. They belonged to the evil one. They attacked genuine believers because as members of Satan's family they were committed to salvation by works. This was the same with the crowd that attacked Jesus Himself. Jesus called those religious leaders children of the Devil (John 8:39-44; 13:2,27).

Principle: Christians will pay a price for taking a stand on grace.

Application: As Cain hated Abel because of his stand on grace, so non-Christians hate Christians because of their belief in salvation by grace. Grace flies in the face of human achievement and self-help. Man wants to come to God his way, not God's way, "I'll find God my way, I don't need any help". The world loves religion but hates grace. God received Abel's sacrifice of grace but not Cain's sacrifice of works.

Heb. 11:4 "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."

1 John 3:13

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you."

Do not marvel,

Christians should not be surprised that the satanic world system hates their view of grace. If Cain killed his brother Abel over grace, it should not cause wonderment that the world hates Christians for their stand on grace.

The Greek indicates that John's readers were already in the process of marveling over the reaction against their message, "Stop marveling over the world's hatred of grace."

my brethren,

John takes up a new mode of address with the words "my brethren." This is the only place where John calls his readers "brethren". John identifies himself as a brother with them in being attacked for his stand on grace found only in Jesus Christ.

if the world hates you

The world always hates the grace means of salvation and sanctification (He 11:36-40). Salvation by grace is inherently inimical to the non-Christian. Those spiritually dead always hate those spiritually alive.

Principle: The world hates the message of grace because it shows them that they are sinners and need salvation.

Application: No Christian should be surprised that the world reacts negatively to the gospel of grace. The gospel is revolutionary for it changes the very nature of the person. A Christian receives a new nature at the point of salvation. This sets him apart from the world system. The world will hate him for this.

Non-Christians will always instinctively hate the Christian who makes an issue out of grace in Christ. Grace always flies in the face of works. There can be no compromise of grace plus works either because grace and works are mutually exclusive.

Rom. 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

The loose living Alcibiades said to Socrates, "Socrates, I hate you, because every time I meet you, you show me what I am". Grace always shows the sinner that he is in need of salvation by grace.

Aristides was condemned to death in Athens. When someone asked a juryman why he cast his vote against such a just man, his reply was that he was tired of hearing Aristides being called "the just." The world hates a mutually exclusive message, a message of authority, a message of grace.

1 John 3:14

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."

We know that we have passed from death to life,

The Christian transitions from death to life at the point of his salvation. The words "have passed" denote to change place, to pass over from one place to another. The Christian changed his place of residence from eternal death to eternal life. The only other occurrence of this term is in John 5:24.

The Greek tense for "we have passed" means that we permanently passed from death to life at one point with the results continuing on [perfect tense]. The transfer from eternal death to eternal life took place at a point in the past; eternal life began at salvation and continues forever. Christians abide in a new state of life after their conversion. They no longer are in the state of death.

The Greek word for "from" means out of. The Christian passes out of the sphere of death into the sphere of eternal life at salvation. The Christian passed from the state of death to the state of eternal life when he trusted Christ to forgive his sins.

Principle: The Christian begins eternal life at salvation and never loses it.

Application: There are different kinds of deaths in the Bible. For example, there is physical death and then there is spiritual death. The fundamental idea

of death is separation. When we die physically, our immaterial souls separate from our bodies. Adam died spiritually when he sinned and died a physical death later. He was still alive bodily but he died spiritually.

Another death is the "second death." This is eternal death where an unbeliever will never have the opportunity to fellowship with God. This death occurs when God casts the unbeliever into the lake of fire forever.

A Christian does not receive eternal life in the future. He received it at a point in the past. Eternal life began for him at the point of salvation (John 5:24). That was a permanent event. It will never change. He received eternal life and eternal life is eternal life, not temporal life.

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

because we love the brethren.

Love for fellow Christians is verification that we passed into the sphere of eternal life at the point of salvation.

John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

He who does not love his brother abides in death

We do not earn eternal life by love but we evidence eternal life by love. Lack of love for Christians is an indication of spiritual death. Part and parcel of spiritual death is lack of love.

Eph. 2:1 "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins..."

Love, on the other hand, indicates that the reality of spiritual life abides in the believer. Loving Christians is an evidence of faith in Christ.

Principle: Loving Christians gives assurance that we possess eternal life.

Application: It is evident that we have come to know Christ if we love Christians. It is also apparent that God gave us the capacity to love. This is convincing, conclusive evidence of having passed into eternal life. When we fall in love with

the Son of God we automatically fall in love with the child of God.

Eph. 5:1 "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

Criticism from non-Christians is easier to take than criticism from saints. God's people are supposed to love us and when they don't, it is a big disappointment. It takes a diamond to cut a diamond.

True love begins at conversion because we love with the love of God. This kind of love is a sign of new birth and the divine nature. God's very nature is love (1 John 4:8). This love enables us to love the unlovely, to love those who irritate us. We can love those who mistreat us. This is the mark of the new nature in Christ.

Some Christians hate other Christians. They resent and are bitter toward people in their church. They may even hate people in their own family. It is clear that these Christians are carnal believers.

Carnal Christians are out of fellowship with the Lord and walk in a form of death, of darkness (1:5-7). This is the death of Romans 8:6, 13; Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:6; James 1:15; 1 John 3:14; Re 3:1. That is also the kind of death that the prodigal son experience when he wandered away from his father. His father said, "my son was dead but he is alive again."

1 John 3:15

"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,

The word "whoever" here refers to Christians, carnal Christians. A Christian can murder and even a fellow Christian at that, according to this verse. Note John's use of "brother" in this phrase.

1 Peter 4:15 "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters."

The word "murderer" is literally manslayer. Murder is the full expression of hatred (Matt. 5:21-

22). The only other occurrence of this word is in John 8:44 where Jesus used it of the Devil.

Hatred is the mental equivalent of murder. Protracted hatred moves to murder, to get rid of the object hated. Hatred is the inevitable precursor to murder.

Principle: The Christian who hates his brother commits a form of mental murderer.

Application: Some Christians feel that if they refrain from physically murdering people they hate, that they do just fine. The biblical viewpoint is that if you hate, you are in the same class as a murderer. I wonder how many murderers will sit in your church this Sunday.

People in church look wonderful but they may not look so wonderful if we could read their minds. However, God does read our minds. There has never been a thought that God did not read; yet He loves us with an infinite love. It is amazing that He loves us after knowing everything about what we do and think.

God does not love us because we gain brownie points with Him; He loves us out of His own character. God does not love us because we give to the church or because we share our faith. It is not what I do; it is what Jesus did that impresses God.

Some Christians are very implacable. These types are very miserable people to be around. Their rigidity tries to make everyone around them conform to their viewpoint and will. This is not love but selfishness. Fellow Christians catch on to this attitude very quickly.

Implacable people may appear to have a very nice personality but others will bypass them. It is one of the most miserable things in the world to be around an implacable person. Their pseudo spirituality cannot cover this sin. They cannot fake spirituality very long.

and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him

The word "know" means to know something intuitively as axiomatic. We know axiomatically that murder is incompatible with eternal life in the Christian. We can make a sweeping declaration that murder is fundamentally against his nature as a Christian. As everyone knows intuitively that

murder is axiomatically wrong as a generally accepted principle, so we can know this of hatred as well.

John does not present the idea that a Christian could never murder. Rather, his argument is that the nature of a child of God does not murder. We know a Christian by his love, not his hate. The very nature and quality of eternal life that he received at salvation is contrary to taking the life of someone else.

It is unimaginable that a child of God would commit murder. Yet, it is possible for a believer to murder. David murdered Uriah the Hittite but he was out of fellowship with God when he did it (2 Sa 12:9). It is inconceivable that God would accept fellowship with a Christian who commits attitudinal murder [hate].

A Christian operating in the carnality of attitudinal murder abides in "death" (3:14). He stays in carnality as long as he continues to hate his fellow Christian. He lives like he did before he became a Christian - in death (3:13). He is deeply out of fellowship with the Lord.

Rom. 8:6 "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.... 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

Principle: God does not fellowship with Christians who commit mental murder.

Application: Genuine believers do murder fellow believers. David murdered Uriah the Hittite (2 Sa 12:9; cf. 1 Peter 4:15).

The object of hate in this verse is "his brother." When a genuine Christian hates a fellow Christian, he commits mental murder. Jesus said that hatred toward other Christians is a form of murder (Matt. 5:21-22). Hatred is the unvarying pioneer to murder. It reveals the attitude of the heart. Murder and hate differ only in degree. The believer wallowing in hate is seriously out of fellowship with his Lord.

Do you burn in anger toward another Christian? You wish him harm? You fancy some awful thing

would fall on him. You cannot stand the sight of him. Almost no one knows about this because if they were to know about it, it would be a blight on your reputation. Your only motivation for not making it known is fear of reprisal from others. The only prohibition is public opinion.

This mentality is the mentality of murder. Mental murderer controls his life. Christ does not control his thinking because hatred obsesses him. He justifies this because he was "hurt" by the object of his hate.

Suppression will not solve this problem because he will suppress it here but it will pop up there. The only way to truly deal with this is to call it what it is - sin. Acknowledge that the sin of hatred violates your fellowship with God. Confess it and move on.

We dare not justify ourselves by rationalizing hate away, "If you understood why I hate him, then you would understand my situation and my hate." Even if we fool other Christians, we cannot fool the Lord. If we do not love our brother, then we hate him.

Hatred not only hurts the person hated but it also hurts the person who hates. This is self-induced misery. It will put the hater ultimately into spiritual bondage.

1 John 3:16

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Now we come to the perfect example of true love - the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of taking a life as Cain did (v. 12), He deliberately gave His life to save others.

By this we know love,

The Greek gives this idea: "By this [what I am about to state] we have come to know love". We came to experience genuine love in the greatest act of love, the death of Jesus for our sins.

because He laid down His life for us.

The characteristic of Christ's love is sacrifice. Love was the motivation for His coming to earth. He demonstrated His love in sacrificing Himself for others.

Matt. 20:28 "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... 15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

The pronoun "He" bears heavy emphasis. John puts prominence on the One who paid for our sins. He is the great unlike, the One of special character. Jesus came to die of His own volition. No one forced Him to die for our sins. Jesus planned, deliberated, and premeditated His death for our sins.

Principle: We identify genuine love by sacrifice.

Application: We understand the love of a husband for his wife not by his words but by how much he gives himself to her. His sacrifice for her indicates to her how much he cherishes her.

Christian love requires sacrifice and service to others. We see this is the sacrifice of Christ for us. Christ's love seeks the welfare of others. This puts a moral obligation on believers. Jesus did it to save; we do it to serve.

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren

Christians live under a divine imperative; they are under an obligation from God. The word "ought" means to owe, be under obligation or debt. It is a financial term for obligation to a debt (Matt. 18:32). The Greek world used it for inner moral obligation.

The word "ought" carries the idea of moral obligation as over against logical necessity. Love becomes complete when we put it into action. The English word is a contraction of two words: owes it. We owe it to the Lord to love like He loved. Children of the Devil care only about themselves

but Jesus laid down His life for others. Christians ought to lay down their lives for others.

The words "lay down" come from a Greek word meaning to divest oneself of something such as clothes. Love divests itself of self and gives to others.

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

Principle: The Christian is under obligation to love like the Lord loved.

Application: There is a moral obligation on us to love like Jesus loved. There is a moral "ought". We "ought", but why don't we? God may never call on us to give our lives physically for others but He clearly calls us to sacrifice for others. That may come in the form of aid or in the form of money. We owe something to Christians because we owe something to Christ.

Rom. 13:8 "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

2 Thess. 1:3 "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other..."

Spiritual Christians follow the example of their Lord in divesting themselves of self. They put the needs of others above their own needs. They seek the highest good in others. It may be inconvenient for them to do this but convenience is not their core value. This love involves itself with the problems of people.

As hatred is a precursor to murder so love leads to life. True love gives one's life for another; it is the capacity to deny self for the interests of others. Jesus laid out this imperative in His farewell address to the disciples (John 13:34-35; 15:12,13).

Paul sensed an obligation to the Greeks and Barbarians (Ro 15:27). He owed the gospel due them so he bound himself to give them the good news.

1 John 3:17

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

John now transitions from imploring Christians to sacrifice for others to something more routine – helping another Christian in need. God does not limit the standard of our love to supreme sacrifice but also to the ordinary course of things. If God expects us to give our lives for one another, surely we could give something of our material stuff.

This verse contains the only specific ethical blemish of John’s readers in the entire letter.

But whoever has this world’s goods,

All of us possess “this world’s goods”. This includes either possessions or property. We could translate “goods” as means of living. Anyone who has any resources for the maintenance of life has something to give to others. Giving to others does not require wealth.

and sees his brother in need,

John now reminds his readers of the principle of the previous verse that believers should sacrifice for fellow Christians (3:16). Sacrifice should include meeting physical needs as well as spiritual needs. The word “sees” is more than observation but also includes the idea of contemplation of need, a continuing observation of need.

and shuts up his heart from him,

Acts 5:23 uses the Greek word for “shuts up” for a jail door securely locked. The idea here is a Christian who refuses to show compassion. He does not have a heart for someone in need. The Christian with some capacity slams the door of compassion in the face of the believer without wealth.

Deet. 15:7 “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother...”

The believer’s “heart” here is his seat of emotions. A believer who shuts up his heart has no empathy (Luke 1:78; 2 Co. 6:12; 7:15; Ph 1:8; 2:1; Philemon. 7,12,20). The word “heart” is literally bowels, that is, the physical organs of the intestines (Acts 1:18).

The Greeks regarded the bowels as the seat of the more vivid passions. The New Testament uses this word both literally for the viscera, the inward parts, entrails and figuratively for the seat of the emotions.

2 Cor. 6:11 “O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.”

2 Cor. 7:15 “And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.”

Principle: Either our possessions control us or we control them.

Application: Some Christians shut up compassion like a closed door to those in need. The believer who lives for personal comfort is not someone who loves fellow Christians.

Loving everyone in general may be an excuse for loving no one in particular. It is very easy to verbalize love or to talk love but it is another thing to give out love. Counterfeit faith, spurious faith does not give to people in need.

James 2:14 “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

Do your possessions own you or do you own them? If you do own them, where is the indication that you do? One clear indication is whether you serve things or people.

1 Tim. 6:7 “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and

perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

A man wrapped up in himself makes for a very small package.

how does the love of God abide in him?

The "love of God" here is God's love, not our love. He is the cause of all genuine love. We cannot meet God's love and not respond with love of our own. As God's love gives to those in need so Christian love should give to those in need. This is a necessary corollary to being a child of the God of love.

Again John uses the term "abide." How can the love of God reside in a believer who does not share with others? John uses the "love of God" as a special effect of our spiritual walk.

Principle: The believer who responds with positive volition to divine love always manifests a corollary counter effect by showing love in tangible fashion to fellow Christians.

Application: Hardness of heart shuts up compassion toward fellow Christians. This is the opposite of pouring out our lives for others (3:16). Willingness to generously give to others is an acid test of our spirituality.

Compassion is the willingness to allow ourselves to be used of God as conduits of mercy in the lives to those who come across our paths. The source of this compassion comes from our fellowship with the Lord.

Love involves more than the great and noble such as sacrificing one's life for another but also the mundane. The greater incorporates the lesser. The test of true love involves not only the greater but also the lesser issues of life. Also, if we refuse to do the least, how can God expect us to do the greater?

1 Tim. 6:17 "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

It is very difficult to prove our love to others if we close our eyes to acts of generosity. Generosity is an indication of our fellowship with God. We cannot fellowship with God and not show acts of benevolence. It shows our likeness to God.

Heb. 13:16 "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

If we can pass Christians by without a twinge of compassion, then all our talk of spirituality is so much loud, clanging noise. The resolution to indifference is compassion.

1 Cor. 13:1 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

God's intention is that each believer would be a conduit of blessing to others. Some Christians take on the mind-set of receiving the grace of God but not giving from the grace of God.

Eph. 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

1 John 3:18

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

My little children,

John uses a term of endearment here because he is about to chastise his readers. He genuinely cares about their spiritual condition.

let us not love in word or in tongue,

John now makes a call for continuing love that demonstrates itself in action and truth.

but in deed

Loving in "deed" stands over against loving in "word." Some people are all talk and no action. God's standard for love manifests itself in action. A believer of true love does something about meeting the needs of others. To love in deed means that the lover does something to meet the need of someone else. Love is more than words; it is action.

and in truth

Love is more than sentiment; it involves the reality of action. Love loves genuinely. Mouthing pious

platitudes is not love. True love shows itself in service to others. Love for fellow Christians is always produced by truth. Some Christians do not love in truth as noted in James.

James 2:14 "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

True love costs something. It cost Jesus' life to pay for our sins.

Principle: We find the manifestation of genuine love in vital performance, not in verbal profession.

Application: Talk is cheap. God expects genuine love, not cheap talk about love. It is not all talk and no walk. When we substitute talk for love, we miss the heart of biblical love. Divine love in point of fact meets the needs of others.

God wants the Christian to love with His love. We cannot love with our anemic love and love to the standard that God expects of us. We draw on God's love to love others.

1 Peter 1:22 "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart..."

This love requires the filling of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love (Ga 5:22). Ask God to fill you with Calvary love (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16). God will make our burdens lighter if we extend love to others. Our problems do not seem to be as dreadful when we love and help others.

Be a blessing to someone who is sick or shut in. If you are in the grip of selfishness, you will live in misery. This is love based on Christ centered love. This is divine love, love that comes from fellowship with the God of love.

2 Cor. 5:14 "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

Love for a wife is more than words; it involves action and sacrifice. She sees that he cherishes her by what he does as well as by what he says. It is not sufficient that we announce our commitment to fellow Christians; we must give ourselves sacrificially to them. True love always meets needs.

Love is not maudlin sentimentality. It is not gushing over people and telling them how wonderful they are, "Oh you are such a wonderful person". That is a form of love but it is not biblical love. Biblical love is something far greater than maudlin sentimentality.

1 John 3:19

"And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him."

John gives three advantages for exercising a life of love (vv. 19-23). The first benefit is assurance of salvation. The preceding urging by John may awaken misgiving in the hearts of his readers.

And by this we know

"By this" refers to verses 17 and 18. Tangible love demonstrates true character and true love. The Christian knows with assurance that he engages in the reality of the Christian life when he loves sacrificially.

The future tense of "know" conveys logical progression. Confidence in the truth comes by progressive understanding of the principles of the Word. The middle voice indicates that the believer benefits from a knowledge of the truth. The indicative mood indicates the reality of his confidence in the truth.

Note the repetition of the word "know" (3:5, 6, 14, 15, 19). This is a person who knows with confidence that he is lined up with the plan of God. The plan of God is "the truth". He has confidence that he is in compliance with truth.

Principle: The result of genuine love is an assured heart in relation to God.

Application: Sometimes the conscience censures the Christian. At times this censure comes involuntarily. None of us is totally blameless. This attack by our conscience on us may be valid or invalid depending on whether it is subjective or objective. Physical illness can cause subjective guilt resulting in ineffective Christian living. This

comes from Satan, not God. It is vague and without objective content. Attacks from a strictly emotional mood with no apparent cause is not a message from God.

Conviction that comes from commission of sin is objective guilt. This is a valid guilt. Giving way to an explosion of anger, indulging in a sexual lust or wounding the reputation of someone are all valid reasons for objective guilt. We know these things to be wrong because the Bible explicitly says that they are wrong. Genuine Christians bear an authentic guilty conscience from these things.

The answer to a guilty conscience is not to subjectively feel bad about our sin but to deal with it biblically. God's answer to guilt is to accept the penalty that Jesus paid for our sin. By faith we believe that Jesus suffered all that needs to be suffered for that sin. Thus, we confess our sin acknowledging that the sin violated God's standard of holiness and that the solution lies in Christ's death on the cross (1 John 1:9).

Knowing the truth of our relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important feature to freedom from a guilty conscience. We need to "know that we are of the truth". The genuine Christian will never face condemnation from God (Ro 8:1).

We cannot measure our censuring conscience unless we know the truth (3:18). We know that we have engaged with the reality of who God is by actively, sacrificially loving fellow Christians. By this we know that the Spirit of God is operating in us. The starting place for confidence is our relationship with God.

Self-examination may cause us concern about how we stand before God. Our conscience is our inner court. Our inner court may concern itself with God's court. Everyone falls short of God's standard for us. None of us love like we should. Therefore, our heart's inner chamber may condemn us. If we avoid facing ourselves, we will get into deeper spiritual hot water than if we do not deal with ourselves.

Thank God that our inner court is not the ultimate court. God will pronounce a final verdict in His higher court. "Search me, Oh God and know my heart and see if there be any wicked way in me."

If our heart condemns us because we do not love fellow Christians, we will lose assurance of salvation. Nothing will sour a Christian more than reaction to a censorious spirit. It will sour the soul. It will shrivel the soul. Some Christians developed the habit of criticism toward everything going on in the church. They are critical of everything and everyone. Simply because others do not fit into our preconceived mold (things can get moldy if we do this! J) Robotically they are wrong, "I am the only one right." This person takes on the idea that they are infallible in their judgments.

Many of us do not know how to offer constructive criticism. God puts us under an obligation to love others even though we do not agree with them. Love tempers our attitude and our speech toward fellow Christians.

God obligates us to love each other whether they are right or wrong. He expects us to love them whether they deserve criticism or not. He wants us to love them although they may criticize us constructively or destructively. Love always tempers what we say, how we say it, and when we say it. You may irritate your wife but she still loves you.

Have you ever met anyone who said, "My biggest flaw is that I love too much"? None of us loves like we should. We can always grow more in this area. Very few of us love like we ought.

that we are of the truth,

The word "of" indicates source. We know that we vitally connect to the truth. We know that we have the right source for truth because we have an understanding of the principles of the Word of God.

Principle: Biblical knowledge produces confidence and confidence produces stability in the Christian life.

Application: Biblical understanding of the principles of the Word produces confidence and confidence produces stability in the Christian life. Those with stability make an impact for the Lord Jesus. He knows why he is here; he knows the purpose of his existence. He does not use spiritual sublimation to substitute for what he does not know. He operates on the infallible, inerrant, unchanging, unadulterated Word of God.

Confidence is a lost quality these days. Doubt is a virtue in our day and heralded as a virtue. A person who knows what he believes, where he is going, and understands the basis of his beliefs is an odd ball in our society. This morass of doubt and uncertainty has produced a crop of Christians that have no point or purpose. They do not share their faith because they themselves are not sure what they believe is right. However, a good grasp of the Word of God gives assurance. This kind of Christian can call a spade a spade.

It is impossible to develop a solid, sound and mature Christian life without knowledge. Christianity based on pure emotion always produces unstable Christians. Many people today say, "Let's just love one another. Doctrine does not matter. Let us throw our arms around each other and say 12 nice things about each other". This is unadulterated emotional sentimentalism. All you have to do is show a nice set of teeth and you are on your way. This is not biblical love or biblical Christianity. It is maudlin, emotional spiritual slop. This is the way false doctrine encroaches into Christianity.

We do not use emotion as a criterion for determining compliance with the will of God. Emotions can lead us astray. They can be very mistaken and even very wrong in determining the will of God. The only absolute norm is the Word of God. Christians who reject didactic teaching of God's Word never come to a place of confidence in what they know. They know very little for sure.

Some Christians live in constant turmoil because they do not know what they believe. Anyone with a different idea than their own is a threat to them. They live in constant confusion. They will be upset and disturbed when they face difficult situations.

The first objective of the Christian life is to know God and His Word. After that we move into service and appreciation for what He has done for us (emotion).

It is possible to be stupid and dogmatic at the same time, of course (and is often the case). This is not the same as the believer who solidly studies the Bible and comes to understand sound principles. However, it is impossible to be stupid and genuinely confident at the same time.

People who know the Word can confidently assert truth. They will make necessary sacrifices for that truth. They will courageously share the truth of the gospel.

Principle always builds on principle. We start out with basic principles and then we build more advanced principles on the basic principles until we develop comprehensive principles that cover many categories of life. We eventually get into significant understanding as to why Christians suffer and the way to handle suffering. Somewhere along the way the Christian comes to solid conviction about his eternal standing and security before God. This is a phase of great liberation in the Christian life. Eventually you come to the place where you understand that you are a personal ambassador for Christ. You represent Him here in time and space.

and shall assure our hearts

God will assure our hearts if we exercise active love as over against imparting pious platitudes. The word "assure" means to persuade, convince, possess confidence. God will enable us to believe that we are truly born again when we engage in active divine love. We may sense our inadequacy to execute divine love but God will give us assurance in this matter.

Our "hearts" is the center of our spiritual being. This is where we have confidence or do not have confidence. The word "heart" includes the thinking apparatus. Assurance comes from thinking and not from emotions.

Principle: We gain assurance before God by appropriating the principles and promises of God's Word.

Application: Assurance is something that can grow. Our primary assurance is based on the naked, written Word of God (5:6-12). That is the most important way we gain assurance. As well, we can gain assurance by loving other Christians. We can be sure of salvation.

A trap in love is to be attracted to someone through sentimentality but not out of true love. Some things stimulate you about this person. That is why biblically our heart includes the thinking process, the ability to form principles from the Word.

It is not accurate to say, "That person has a head belief but not a heart belief", because the word "heart" includes head belief. Faith always includes what we know, the objective Word of God. When belief engages with the promises of God, we see a heart belief. It will impact the entire person.

Two and two is four. That is true whether anyone believes it or not. However, when someone accepts that fact and activates belief in that principle then he is engaged with truth. They activate their faith in the fact of two and two is four.

Unbelief always comes from the heart as well. It is a rational rejection of what the Bible says is true. The heart also involves the will and attitude. For example, a girl may break off a deep relationship with a guy, not because she does not appreciate or want him, but because she came to an understanding that being unequally yoked with an unbeliever is wrong. She did this on the basis of a principle from the Word (2 Cor. 6:14,17). She did not make this decision from her emotions but in spite of her emotions. Her emotions told her to stay with the guy but her head told her to break it off. This is a person operating on principle over emotion.

We can see this principle in the application of the principle behind 1 Peter 5:7, "...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you". There comes a temptation for someone to enter into an attitude of anxiety (suspension between two points of whether the good thing will happen to me or the bad thing will happen to me). This person then applies the principle that he is under the sovereign care of God so he releases his anxiety about his problem to God. He puts his problems in the Lord's hands. He is now free from his problems. He is now in control of his problems and his problems are not in control of him. He now has a confidence in what God can do about his situation. His faith depended on the object of the Word of God. He has an object for his faith – the promise of God. It is always principle first then application second.

People without principle always revert to emotion. They try to compensate for their lack of biblical content by operation bootstraps. They then

become vulnerable to false teaching (note verses 22-23). All this points to the vacuum of biblical truth in their souls. When they have little biblical content in their souls, they cannot claim the promises of the principles of the Word for their lives. They cannot apply what they do not know (2 Tim. 2:19).

before Him

The place where we need assurance is "before Him". We do everything in the presence of the Lord. "Before Him" expresses God's pleasure and will. God knows the worst in us yet He still desires our fellowship. The Greek implies that we will meet the Lord face to face. This is the believer in fellowship, living in the Spirit-filled life. He knows with assurance that he walks with the Lord.

Principle: Conviction and certainty comes from what the Lord gives us, not what we do for ourselves.

Application: A Christian who understands the grace principle knows that he does not have to make restitution for his sins. He knows that he does not have to pay with a subjective guilt for his sins, that is, punish himself for his sins.

This Christian understands that Jesus took all the punishment and penalty for his sins. He knows that taking a vow to never do it again is error. He knows that he does not have to attend the evening service for a year to make up for his sins. His confidence is in the Lord, not in himself.

1 John 3:20

"For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

For if our heart condemns us,

The word "condemns" portrays the idea of accusation and blame. No one knows us like we do. Our "heart" is a self-reflecting court over our lives. This court can be fair or unfair. It can excuse or accuse. It depends on the standard we use.

Principle: God wants us to operate on objective guilt, not subjective guilt.

Application: Self-examination may cause us to be alarmed about the condition of our souls. We may see ourselves falling desperately short of God's

standard for living. This is especially true in the sphere of loving fellow Christians.

Our conscience is not infallible and neither is the judgment of other Christians against us infallible. We are often unjust with ourselves and excuse our sin. Other Christians also can be unfair with us and judge us unjustly for vested interest reasons.

1 Cor. 4:3 "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord."

There is a delicate balance between justifying sin and an overly sensitive conscience. God never overlooks or minimizes our sin so neither should we. Conviction of sin is a result of genuine belief in God and His Word. This is objective guilt. Objective guilt is good but subjective guilt is bad in God's economy.

We cannot determine truth by experience. Our only basis for assessing our relationship to God always rests on the objective and eternal Word of God. The believer should not be harder on himself than God is. Feelings of self-condemnation and inadequacy are enemies of the Christian life. Subjective guilt is not a norm or standard of God.

Our hearts can take a low view of ourselves when we think that we do not measure up to a set of subjective standards. In this case, we are our own accuser. We hold a trial in the inner court of our being and then develop a feeling of false guilt. This is a distortion of soul. This is especially true in the sphere of loving fellow Christians. It is subjectively difficult to measure love so it is hard to determine whether we love enough.

God is greater than our heart,

It is possible to be too easy or too hard on ourselves. God is the ultimate judge of our hearts. We can overcome feelings of subjective guilt by remembering the nature of God. God's knowledge is omniscient. He knows our true motives.

Our "heart" is a vice-regent to God's ultimate regency over our souls so His judgment surpasses our judgment. His judgment is more accurate and absolute than ours. He knows the true nature of our sin; therefore, we can have assurance that God deals with us in accuracy and compassion.

God is not sympathetic toward us because He sees mitigating circumstances, right motives and conscientious efforts. This verse does not say, "God does not excuse us even if our conscience condemns us because of these things". No, the issue is either God will confirm the accusation of our heart or He will exonerate us according to the standards of His omniscience. He knows whether genuine love dwells in our heart or not. That is why we must love in "deed and truth."

In the final analysis, if our conscience condemns us, it does not necessarily mean that we are non-Christians or that we are out of fellowship. Neither does it necessarily mean that we are Christians or Christians in fellowship.

Principle: God has the capacity to distinguish between objective and subjective guilt.

Application: If our conscience is correct in judging us, then God will execute discipline on us if we do not confess our sin in due time. If our verdict is incorrect, then He will overrule our verdict in favor of His omniscient justice. Ultimately, we cannot put final trust in our conscience. We cannot trust these things to our feelings. Our primary assurance lies in the written Word of God.

If our heart condemns and criticizes us because we know that we have not loved like we should, it is the Word of God that forms a true conscience in us. This objective and genuine conscience comes from the Word. Our conscience then can consist of one of two opposing dimensions: 1) our own norms formed from human values, and 2) God's values formed from the Word. The believer in fellowship forms his standards from divine viewpoint, not human viewpoint.

We may pursue a course of action but that action is contrary to the Word of God. Our hearts judicially condemn us for this. This is a violation of a norm of God. God will not bless us when we knowingly rebel against one of His standards. God's standard is greater than our standard. His value is greater than our value.

Once the believer accepts the fact that he violated God's value and confesses his sin, then God accepts him back into fellowship. Love for other Christians assures us of our fellowship to God. Jesus manifested His love to us. Sometimes we do not love like He loved. There are times when we

do not come close to His kind of love and that may cause doubt about our fellowship with God. We cannot gage our relationship by subjective experience. If this were the case, we would never know for sure whether we are acceptable to God. Our fellowship with God is determined by faith derived from the Word.

God always bases His judgment on us by looking at our faith. Confidence by faith is the basis for moving forward in the Christian life. If we did not have confidence that God hears our prayers, we would not pray.

God accepts us with all our failures. He will not justify our failures but He loves us through Jesus Christ. Jesus paid for our sins so God extends forgiveness to us because of Him. Our authority for continued fellowship rests on Jesus, not on our overt moral behavior. We can approach God without apprehension that He will reject our prayers. We can pray with confidence because we come "in Jesus name."

and knows all things

We do not know "all things" but God does. We often unjustly judge ourselves. God knows our motives perfectly. He is the perfect judge. There is a great difference between conscience and omniscience. God is the greatest witness to our soul's activities. If we condemn ourselves, we must remember that there is a greater Judge of our souls and He will always be fair with us.

Principle: The believer must accept God's perfect judgment on him rather than exclusively his own imperfect judgment.

Application: God knows self-sacrificing love is not a normal thing. It is not normal for us to respond to undermining of our reputation with love. To return good for evil is a dynamic of spirituality. A spiritual person can forgive and move on. He does this because of his new life in Christ. It is contrary to his fallen nature.

Since God knows everything about us and loves us anyway, why cannot we accept ourselves like God accepts us? This does not mean that we rationalize our sin away but it means that after dealing with our sin, we accept ourselves like God accepts us. We cannot base fellowship with God on our feelings; we must base it on objective

revelation in God's Word. God offers forgiveness if we confess and deal with our sins (1 John 1:9). God links His omniscience with His mercy. Although He knows every secret of our hearts, He still extends His mercy.

It is the work of our enemy to accuse us (Re 12:10). Satan will take our sensitive conscience and use it against us. Our confidence comes from the promises of God, not from our overt behavior patterns. It is not God's will that we constantly live in a state of condemning ourselves. He does not want us to wallow in guilt.

For example, we put an airplane in an air tunnel to determine whether it is worthy to fly. However, we do not leave the plane in the air tunnel. At some point we test it in the skies. After the test in the sky, we do not continue to test the airplane. We get on with the business of transporting people to their destinations. Christians who live in constant self-examination do not live dynamic spiritual lives.

Some people constantly raise the question as to whether they are genuine Christians. Other Christians never arrive at the point of confidence with God. They live in a state of self condemnation, "Have I served the Lord enough; am I spiritual enough; have I given what God expects of me?"

There is a point where we must face ourselves and deal with our objective guilt but there is also a point where we move on. My heart is not the Supreme Court; God sits in the seat of the single Supreme Court Judge. I must accept His judgments on things. His verdict is final. My judgment is not final but God's judgment is ultimate. My subjective guilt is not God's norm for fellowship.

It is also a warp in our soul if we wallow in subjective guilt. Objective guilt is one thing but subjective guilt is another. Constantly looking within produces spiritual naval gazing. It puts the Christian into a spiritual self-centeredness.

Objective guilt is a norm for Christian living. How do we reassure our hearts if we find something truly amiss in our souls? It is distortion of immense proportion if we cannot face our own souls. We do not want to deceive ourselves or live

under a deception that we are in fellowship with God when we are not.

The Christian who wants to walk with God desires the evidence against him. He wants to know what breaks fellowship with God. He knows that he has the tendency to sweet-talk his own spirituality and thus fool himself. This is spiritual self-delusion. He does not want to wait for others to tell him. His friends may not have the courage to tell him what he needs to know about himself.

1 John 3:21

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.”

John follows the problem of an accusing conscience with the issue of confidence before God. This is the flip side of verses 19 and 20.

Beloved,

John clearly addresses this section to Christians.

if our heart does not condemn us,

John now takes up the believer with a clear conscience. His conscience does not condemn him for hypocritical love exhibited only with word and tongue (3:18).

The opposite of a feeling of condemnation is “confidence”. The believer in fellowship has the confidence to meet the Lord face to face in personal communion because he genuinely loves fellow Christians. He takes no glee in undermining fellow believers in Christ.

we have confidence toward God

“Confidence” is openness, candor, plainness of speech, unreserved utterance. In the political sphere, the word “confidence” carries the idea of the right to speak in a democracy. This implies openness to truth and candor. Here the idea is openness toward God (5:14-15). Openness toward God assumes a good conscience with Him (3:22-24). The believer with “confidence toward God” is free and unrestricted in his fellowship with God. His conscience is free because he understands and applies his acquittal in God’s court.

The presence of sin in the believer’s life does not prove that he is not a Christian or that God’s grace is unavailable to him. The verdict always revolves around the principles of God’s Word.

The word “toward” means face to face. This is a word of relationship or fellowship. The believer in fellowship always speaks freely with God. He has confidence in prayer knowing that God hears him. His conscience does not trouble him.

Principle: When a Christian gains assurance that God accepts him on the work of Christ, he possesses confidence toward God.

Application: The Christian can have confidence before God in time on earth and not simply at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We have confidence in prayer. We can rest assured that God accepts us with all our warts and blemishes.

Confidence does not come by feelings. Emotions are slippery and hard to nail down. Feelings are as erratic as the wind because they depend on circumstances. They operate more like a barometer than a thermostat. The barometer changes with weather conditions but the thermostat sets the temperature. The Christian who operates by faith in the Word of God is like the thermostat. He has confidence before God by faith.

The believer operating with confidence toward God approaches Him with boldness.

Eph. 3:12 “...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

Phil. 1:19 “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

Heb. 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Heb. 10:19 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water... 35

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward."

The believer in fellowship does not put confidence in the flesh. He puts his confidence in the Son of God. He glories in Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3:3 "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh..."

1 John 3:22

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

We come to the second benefit of a confident heart. We have the confidence to ask things from God in prayer.

And whatever we ask

The idea here is to continually ask day after day. John qualifies this phrase by the two following conditions in this verse.

we receive from Him,

There are two stipulations to answered prayer that follow in this verse. God grants answer to prayer based on the prayer meeting His will firstly by following the principles of the Word. Secondly, God answers the prayer that seeks to please Him. The believer in fellowship wants to please the Lord. He does not demand from the Lord. His prayers are in the will of God so God answers him according to his biblical prayers.

Principle: Obedience to God's will and desire to please Him are the conditions but not the merit for answered prayer.

Application: The conditions for answered prayer rests on six principles:

1. The prayer must be offered in Christ's name (John 16:23-24).
2. The prayer must be for God's glory (James 4:2-3).
3. The prayer must not be for sinful purposes (Ps 66:18).
4. The prayer must be from a forgiven soul (Mk 11:25).
5. The prayer must be asked by faith (Matt. 21:22).

6. The prayer must issue in doing God's will (our verse).

There are some things that we do not give our children because it might spoil them. That is the prerogative of the parent. It is for their good that we do not give to them everything they ask. God cannot afford to give some of us success because it might ruin our Christian lives. God answers every prayer that has to do with Christian development or spirituality that is prayed in His will.

because we keep His commandments

The word "because" gives the reasons God answers prayer. We can have confidence that God answers prayer according to two conditions. The two qualifications for God answering our prayer in this verse are these: 1) we "keep His commandments". and 2) we "do those things that are pleasing in His sight". God's commandments are His precepts or principles for living the Christian life.

The believer who lives in the habitual condition of applying the principles of God's Word to experience receives answers to his prayers. Does this mean that God answers prayers for a quid pro quo? That is, does God give us according to how much we give Him? God does not grant answered prayer and give us certain benefits because we measure up to His expectations but because we meet His conditions for prayer.

Principle: What we do off our knees is important to what we say on our knees.

Application: Some people pray regularly but they do not receive answer to prayer because they do not know the principles of the Word. We cannot pray effectively without knowing the Word. We cannot pray effectively without walking in the Spirit. We need to "pray in the Spirit" (Ep 6:18). God does not answer the prayer of a carnal Christian (Ps 66:18; James 4:2,3; 1 Peter 3:7).

What we do off our knees is important to what we say on our knees. How we live has direct bearing on answered prayer. This is not to say that God's answer to our prayer is conditional on obedience. God answers prayer because we fashion our asking according to His will. God always answers prayer according to His will. We know His will by what is revealed in the Word.

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

1 John 5:14 "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

God never promises that we will receive anything we ask. That would put us in the place of God. God would have to rearrange the universe to answer a finite prayer.

God does not answer prayer according to quid pro quo, "If I give something to God, He will give something to me." He does not give as an exchange of favors. We can make no religious bargains with God. No, God answers prayer because our prayers are fashioned according to His will. The more we fellowship with Him, the more we know His will.

and do those things that are pleasing in His sight

The petitioner in his prayer desires nothing but to follow God's principles and to please Him. Doing what is "pleasing in His sight" goes beyond applying the specific principles of the Word [previous phrase]. These are spontaneous acts and service born out of a spirit of regard or desire to please God. This goes way beyond a mere sense of duty or responsibility.

The words "in His sight" are different than the words "before Him" of verse 19. "Before Him" emphasizes the pleased interest of Christ in His obedient and loving servants as He looks upon us. Whereas the phrase "in His sight" emphasizes our confident attitude as we look to Him.

Principle: The spiritual Christian lives to make the Lord smile.

Application: The spiritual Christian lives to make the Lord smile. Many of us make Him frown. Our ambition is to please the Lord. Our passion is to please Him because He took the initiative with us. All prayer should come from the motivation of pleasing the Lord, not acquiring selfish things for ourselves.

Rom. 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to

God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable [pleasing] and perfect will of God."

2 Cor. 5:9 "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him."

Col. 1:10 "...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..."

1 John 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."

This verse begins the transition into the subject of belief in 1 John and also explains verse 22. It is the climax to the section beginning at 3:18.

And this is His commandment:

John distills Jesus' ideas as represented in the gospel of John in this verse. The word "commandment" is singular for God does not separate belief and love. They operate under one commandment because they are indissolubly united. It is impossible to have belief in Jesus Christ without love for His family.

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

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you... 17 "These things I command you, that you love one another."

that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ

This is the first direct reference to belief in 1 John. This reference is to belief after becoming Christians. The Greek tense indicates decisive action [aorist tense]. John blends the ideas of decisive belief as a Christian and decisive love as a

Christian together. We count on Christ's authority for this.

The "name" of Jesus represents all that He is, His person and work. It is in the significance of the name of Jesus that we believe. We believe all that the name of "His Son, Jesus Christ" stands for. "His Son" stands for His majesty, His unique deity. "Jesus" represents his redemptive humanity. "Christ" represents His Messianic office. Just as our name represents us so Jesus' names represent the essence of who He is. He stands behind His signature.

Note the full title given to Jesus Christ. The idea is that we should believe in the message that the name conveys. We believed on the name of Jesus at the point of salvation but now we are to believe the name of Jesus Christ, that is, all that this wonderful person represents. We trust in the authority that His name signifies.

John refers to prayer in verses 21 and 22. We always come "in Jesus' name" in prayer, that is, in His authority. Our authority for prayer is our status quo in Christ. God does not hear us because of us but because of Him.

Principle: Our authority with God orbits around Jesus' name.

Application: The Christian life revolves around the person of Christ. Christianity is Christocentric. We worship both the person and work of Christ. His name represents His glory.

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Matt. 1:21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Matt. 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..."

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not

believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We come to God in prayer in the authority of Jesus name.

John 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

John 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

Salvation is by Jesus name.

Acts 4:12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Rom. 10:13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

and

The "and" links conduct of love to belief upon which it is founded. Right living grows out of right belief and right thinking in relation to the Son. One is impossible without the other.

love one another,

Love is the necessary effect of dynamic faith (James 2:17). Loving the family of God is important because it is "His commandment". A condition for answered prayer (previous verse) depends on loving fellow believers. We count on the authority of Christ for this. Faith in Christ is perpendicular whereas love for the saints is horizontal and visible. We prove our faith by love for the saints.

Col. 3:14 "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

as He gave us commandment

Correspondence between Jesus' command and our love is equivalent to loving in "deed and

truth" (3:18). Jesus linked the ideas of trust in Him and loving each other.

God gave us "commandment", not advice, that we combine belief and love. These two dynamics follow in sequence. They are not good if detached. We must take both of them.

Principle: Belief is not valid if it is detached from love.

Application: Belief and love are equally balanced and essential to a walk with God. We cannot detach one from the other without doing violence to one or the other. The filling of the Holy Spirit or fellowship with God depends on both belief and love. We cannot have fellowship with God without both. One depends on the other.

The irreducible minimum of the Christian walk is belief and love. This is the fulcrum of our faith. These two dynamics reflect the essence of the Christian faith. Belief is the apparatus by which we respond to God. Love is the means by which we relate to believers. We cannot separate the two. We need both the vertical and the horizontal.

The onus for making the decision to believe and love is on us. God will never jump through our will to make a decision for us. When we decide to do His will, He then moves in the power of the Holy Spirit through us.

1 John 3:24

"Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

This last verse of the chapter brings us back to the issue of abiding in Christ, of fellowship with the Lord.

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him,

The idea of "abides" here is live in fellowship. The believer who applies principles of God's Word to experience lives in fellowship with the Lord (3:22). The word "keeps" is a synonym for applying truth to experience.

The believer who is habitually characterized [present tense] by applying the principles of the Word to experience harmoniously abides in fellowship with the Lord. Abiding is subjective

depending on whether we are filled with the Spirit or not.

and He in him.

Fellowship with God involves mutual reciprocity. God Himself lives in fellowship with us when we apply truth to experience. We share the most intimate fellowship with God, a state that God desires.

God inextricably couples together fellowship with Him and application of the principles of His Word to experience (2:5, 24, 27-29; 3:18-19).

Principle: Application of truth to experience characterizes fellowship with God.

Application: The abiding of God in us has the necessary counterpart of our abiding in Him. There is reciprocity of relationship and fellowship. The initial cause is always God's responsibility without Whom we can do nothing. Our action is simple response to God's action. That is why we can do nothing in our own power. All we do is a product of God's power except the volition of choosing to do so. As God's abiding in us is from His initiative so our abiding is a response to God's initiative. This abiding conveys the idea of persistent fellowship.

John 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

These things abide in the believer:

1. The Word of God, 2:14
 2. The Anointing, 2:27
 3. The seed, 3:9
 4. The love of God, 3:17
 5. God Himself, 3:24; 4:12,13,15
 6. Christ (implied in 3:24). Cf.. John 6:56 and 15:5
- The 4th evidence of the new life in the believer is the Spirit filled life.
1. Keeping God's commandments, 2:3,4
 2. Doing of righteousness, 2:29
 3. Loving in deeds as well as word, 3:14,18
 4. Filling of the Spirit, 3:24

And by this we know that He abides in us,

Applying truth to experience is valid proof of our fellowship with the Lord. Application of the principles of God's Word to experience is not the cause but the effect of fellowship with God. This is the evidence of fellowship.

We come to know experientially [Greek word for "know"] that we are in fellowship with the Lord if we apply truth to experience. His abiding in us is more important than our abiding in Him. The Lord is keen to convey to us His pleasure to have fellowship with us.

by the Spirit whom He has given us

The Holy Spirit working in us is evidence of fellowship with the Lord (Rom 5:5; 8:14-16). Actual fellowship of life with God is the core of John's argument in this epistle. Apart from the Holy Spirit supernaturally conveying information about our fellowship with the Lord, it would be impossible to know about God's viewpoint on fellowship with us.

The tense in the Greek for "has given" means permanence [perfect tense]. God gave the Holy Spirit to us permanently at the point of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13).

Principle: Ultimately, assurance of fellowship with the Lord comes from the Lord, not us.

Application: The result of fellowship is assurance of God's work in us and power in prayer. The Spirit filled life is a prerequisite for answered prayer and the power to love Christians.

Rom. 5:5 "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

The source of assurance of God's fellowship with us is the abiding Holy Spirit within us. In the final analysis, assurance of fellowship comes from God Himself. The Holy Spirit initiates belief and He assures us of belief. He empowers us to love Christians. He affects our wills so that we want to do His will.

Spirituality is the essence where all attitudes and actions find their source. God inherently connects spirituality to eternal life because eternal life is God's life. When a Christian receives eternal life, God animates him with new life, eternal life.

When the believer walks with God in fellowship, eternal life becomes manifest in him.

Sometimes the believer violates his new nature in Christ. When he does this he violates the very animating principle of his spiritual being. The believer constantly has a war within himself between his divine nature and his fallen nature (3:6-10). Every time the believer allows God to control him through his new nature, it always comes from God's power. It is a manifestation of his eternal life.

1 John 4

1 John 4:1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

John begins chapter four in the minor key and warns against false teachers.

Beloved,

God loves every believer with exactly the same amount of love. God loves that miserable believer just as much as he loves you.

Eph 1:6 "...accepted in the beloved one."

do not believe every spirit,

John's readers were susceptible to false teachers. The Greek says, "Stop believing every spirit". They were already in the process of giving credence to false doctrine. John's readers were so naive that they believed anything the false teacher Cerinthus had to say. He was very eloquent and personable. He was a marvelous salesman; he could sell anything to anyone but his message was from the evil one. Many people flocked to hear him.

Principle: God calls on us to disbelieve as well as believe, to be critical of teaching, and to measure all teaching by the Word of God.

Application: Many Christians are naïve and vulnerable to religious error. They are gullible simply because it is "religious". They need to understand the importance of discernment and the ability to disbelieve certain people. It is impossible to believe in absolute truth without rejecting error. We cannot both love God and the Devil simultaneously. We cannot hate sin and love sin at the same time.

Eph. 4:14 "...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..."

God calls on the Christian to disbelieve as well as believe, to be critical of teaching and to measure all teaching by the Word of God. Faith is one thing but credulity is another. Genuine belief examines

that to which it commits itself. It never accepts doctrine uncritically.

The Devil always comes in a disguise, usually in the form of religion. Religion is the Devil's ace trump. The general populace generally trusts religion because it has a moral quality to it. The Devil appeared to Adam and Eve in a deceptive guise. He undermined the Word of God by saying, "Don't you think that God is unreasonable in not letting you eat of that tree? It seems unreasonable and callous to me".

The Word of God is the court beyond which there is no appeal. It is the Supreme Court in spiritual matters, an infallible Supreme Court. Each of its judgments is infallible. We should never accept at face value what any religious leader has to say because they are fallible. We always check them out with the Word. If the Bible says it, it is true. If the Bible does not say it, it is not true.

Isaiah 8:20 "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

If we do not have the Word as the standard for measuring things then we will fall for any false doctrine that comes down the pike. That is the only way we can stay true to God.

Acts 17:11 "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

Paul's listeners checked on his teaching by the Word of God. They did not accept at face value what they heard simply because a noted preacher said it.

but test the spirits,

The word "but" is a term of strong contrast. Instead of gullibly believing religious leaders, we test their teaching by the Word of God.

John puts the word "spirits" here for people who claim special revelation but this revelation is clearly not from God. Many religious types will present themselves as representing the Word or even as a prophet from God but they do not teach sound doctrine.

Mature believers "test the spirits." The word "test" means to test for approval. "Find out

whether you approve or disapprove of any given teaching by comparing their teaching to the statements of the Word" (4:2-3). God has an objective standard for testing doctrine. The Bible is the ultimate standard for truth. We find all we know of Jesus there. The Bible is the only reliable criterion for determining truth about Him and about truth itself.

whether they are of God;

We must distinguish false teachers from true teachers. The acid test of a false teacher is their view of the person of Christ (4:2-3). Much religious teaching does not find its source in God; it is not "of God".

What a prophet says must agree with previously revealed truth, he must speak in the name of the Lord and the prophecy must come to pass (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Jer. 23:9-22; 28:9).

Principle: The believer must clearly understand the Word of God before he can be spiritually self-sustaining and distinguish truth from error.

Application: The believer must have clear understanding of God's Word before he can be spiritually self-sustaining. This is a great objective of the Christian life. We must have an objective norm before we can test something. The norm is the truth of God's Word. The Word of God gives us discernment.

Think of someone who is as repugnant to you as anyone could ever be. Let's say that she is a woman. Suppose this individual didn't have a bath in a year. She insults all your olfactory senses. She has bad breath and is ghastly looking. Seepage comes from her eyes and mouth. She forgot her wig and she is bald. She has 4 front teeth missing and weighs 325 pounds. She comes up to you, smiles and says, "Honey, let us just forget about our differences and go out on a date".

Now, I am a discerning person for I have all my olfactory senses. I have eyes that can take in this monstrosity. I have a nose that can smell it. So, I say, "No thanks, not today". Then I walk about three steps and decide to take off in a dead run. That is discernment!

Now someone comes along and says, "The Bible teaches the essence of the Christian life is to gain a better self image". Or, "It is sinful for you not to

be healed in all cases". Do you have discernment to run from this false teaching? There are a lot of phonies out there today. They pretend to know truth but they are only fakers. It takes biblical scrutiny to ferret them out.

2 Pet. 2:1 "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction."

2 Pet. 3:16 "...as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures."

If we do not test religious spirits, Satan will sucker us into his system. Ephesians 6 talks about his system.

Eph. 6:12 "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

There is the satanic system on one hand and God's point of view on the other hand. There is an invisible war raging every day and we live between the forces of God and those of the Devil.

because many false prophets have gone out into the world

The world was full of false prophets. There were not just a few but "many" false prophets even in John's day.

The word "because" gives the reason why we must test religious people to see if they are truly from God. The reason is that "many false prophets have gone out into the world" representing themselves as from God Himself.

The words "gone out" are in a tense that indicates that they are already influencing John's readers [perfect tense]. They are not about to go out, they were already out spreading their bogus teaching. They were eloquent and persuasive people so they got quite a hearing.

1 John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they

would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."

They went out from us because they were not "of us". They went out because they "crept in" in the first place. They were spiritual sneaks. No one noticed them coming in. They did not walk in the front door but slipped in the back door. All along they were traitors undermining the message of Jesus Christ. They are in the church as part of the woodwork. That is why it is hard to detect their error.

Jude 4 "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Principle:

Application: False prophets look like sheep but actually they are wolves. They talk nice and have wonderful personalities but their teaching is deadly. They look like true representatives of the Word but they represent the Devil.

Wolves always come in sheep's clothing. They outwardly appear religious. Often they are loving and kind but inside they are ravenous wolves that love to eat Christians for lunch.

Matt. 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

Today the woods are filled with false teachers. Bible believing Christians buy into false teachings in great numbers. We must remember this, "if it is new, it is probably not true". Those who claim that their religion has special insights into God and their interpretation is the only right one, buyer beware! Just because it appears spiritual does not make it true.

How can a Christian detect a false teacher? The believer does not look at his personality, intellect, ability to persuade or his organization; he must look at the content of his teaching. Many evangelicals today buy into blatant false teaching because they do not have the discernment to differentiate between the Word and humanly manufactured teaching.

Christians believe in an infallible Bible, not in an infallible church or infallible leaders. The idea of

infallible leaders is religious superstition. God gives each believer the discernment necessary to decipher truth from error. He also gives each Christian a built-in Bible Teacher – the Holy Spirit who authored and superintended the inerrant writing of Scripture. That is why we bring everything we hear to the Word of God to check it out.

1 John 4:2

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God..."

By this you know the Spirit of God:

The specific doctrine whereby we test to find whether a teacher is false or true is the doctrine of Christ. If a person denies either the deity or the humanity of Christ, he is a false teacher. Some of John's readers had come to believe that Jesus did not come in the flesh.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God

One test of truth revolves around Jesus Christ. Cerinthus, a Gnostic, taught that Jesus did not have true humanity. By denying the physical, historical humanity of Christ, they attacked Jesus' basis for redeeming us. The death of the body of Christ was necessary to pay for our sins. If this did not happen, then it undermines our salvation.

The word "confesses" means to identify. If anyone does not identify with and acknowledge the humanity of Christ, they are a faker. Belief about the incarnate Son of God is a touchstone of the Christian faith. Candid acknowledgement that the Messiah came in the flesh to forgive sins is the heart of Christian belief.

Principle: By the incarnation Jesus took part of our life; by regeneration, we take part of Jesus' life.

Application: Jesus took on humanity that He might die with it. He gave His life that we might have His life.

Jesus eternally existed as God but at a point in time He stepped foot on earth and took on humanity. In doing this, He did not divest Himself of His deity. He set aside the voluntary use of His deity while He lived in His humanity. The babe in Bethlehem was far more than a

remarkable child; He was the God the Son who stepped into a human body. He never ceased to exist as God. He did not begin when He was born. Denial of this is the spirit of the antichrist.

2 Cor. 5:18 "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

1 Tim. 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

C. S. Lewis said, "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse". Anything less than viewing Jesus as eternal God who took on humanity is simply throwing kisses at Him. It does not take His deity seriously.

We cannot whittle Him down and still worship Him in all His glory.

1 John 4:3

"...and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world."

and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.

Every false teacher that does not acknowledge Jesus' incarnation [God dwelling in flesh] is not of God.

And this is the spirit of the Antichrist,

False teachers that deny the incarnation get this idea from the "Antichrist". The Antichrist wants to undermine the incarnation because it is the basis of our salvation. It would make the person and work of Christ meaningless.

which you have heard was coming,

John faithfully taught his readers that apostasy was to come on them. They knew it was going to happen before it happened.

and is now already in the world

The Antichrist was not there at the time of the writing of 1 John but the spirit of the Antichrist had already come by his false prophets and teachers. He already had his emissaries attacking John's readers.

Principle: Jesus' humanity redeemed lost humanity.

Application: The issue is not the manner or mode of Christ's coming but the constitution of His humanity. From the moment Jesus became man, He identified with fallen humanity. His humanity redeemed lost humanity. Contradiction of this is the spirit of the Antichrist.

The spirit of the Antichrist is subtle in our day. Many messengers of liberalism eviscerate the message of the gospel. They deny the Bible as the Word of God. They deny the deity of Christ. They reject the idea that man is sinful and depraved. They have no message to sin-sick souls. Many churches today are filled with this kind of preacher.

Most false teachers admit that an historical Jesus appeared in the world just like they will admit that Alexander the Great was an historical figure but they will not admit to the fact that God stepped foot in a human body to pay for the sins of humanity.

1 John 4:4

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

You are of God, little children,

The readers of this epistle belonged to God's family and as such had God's resources to fight false teaching. New birth, spiritual birth has affinity with truth. Regenerated people owe their allegiance to their Father, their Procreator. There is correspondence between the message of God and the people of God.

and have overcome them,

John's readers overcame the false prophets and teachers with all their deception. This does not say that they overcame error with apologetics or clever arguments. They had no extended course in cult awareness. They found their power in the next phrase – "He who is in you is greater".

Rev. 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world

The one who is "in" them is the Holy Spirit (3:24; 4:2). He is the foundation of their victory over false prophets and is far greater than satanic power [he who is in the world].

1 John 5:19 "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

Principle: There is an affinity between God's people and God's truth.

Application: Satan aims his primary attack against weak Christians. The world system hates Christianity. We must not forget that. The religious world, the political world, and the every day world hate Christ. Satan constantly comes up with arguments against Christianity that people want to believe.

Satan's primary appeal is to get people to think independently from the Word of God. If he can get them to buy into that idea then he has them. This idea makes man the ultimate authority. The Bible requires that man make the revelation of God ultimate authority. Man is finite and he needs an infinite being to communicate eternal truth to him. He especially needs the light of divine revelation because sin blinds his mind to spiritual things (2 Cor. 4:3,4).

The Christian does not gain victory over the world by his superior intelligence or because of his knowledge of the cults. He gains that victory through the Holy Spirit. He puts confidence in the Spirit of God using the Word of God to give understanding of God's truth. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives him power beyond himself. The Holy Spirit is the true power in the believer.

Satan is the real power against God and God's purpose in the world.

1 John 4:5

"They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them."

They are of the world.

False prophets find the source of their teaching in the satanic world system. They do not understand God's viewpoint on life. God's apostles are "of God" (4:4) and speak from God.

Therefore they speak as of the world,

Note the contrast between "of the world" and "of God" (4:4). The false teachers speak from the viewpoint of the world system. Their message is consistent with the character of the source of the satanic system.

and the world hears them

Those who reject Christ find reciprocity in false teaching. These false teachers produce proselytes who relate to their teaching because of the correspondence of values between them. False teachers tell people what they want to hear. This makes their message invariably fashionable and popular. The world loves their language but their ideas never rise higher than human viewpoint.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Principle: False teachers invariably conform to the world system.

Application: False teachers invariably derive the character of their teaching from the satanic world system. Because of this, they speak in a manner befitting that system. The whole thing is a reciprocal system, each feeding on the other. The world gives them an audience because their message is what they want to hear.

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Christians cannot accommodate to the world's beliefs without doing serious damage to their

walk with God. If we accept the prevailing currents of value of our day, we will lose dynamic fellowship with God. We must choose to operate within God's domain or the Devil's domain.

1 John 4:6

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

We are of God.

The "we" here refers to the apostles who authored the New Testament. The "we" is set in contrast to the "they" of verse five. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles' writings with special revelation. The apostles clearly understood that.

He who knows God hears us;

Genuine believers respond with positive volition to true teachers. The gospel and the Word of God ring true to them. There is affinity and correspondence between God's people and God's Word. The words "he who knows" is literally "the one knowing". This is a person clearly described as a believer.

he who is not of God does not hear us.

Fakers do not respond to the truth. They do not witness the truth because their hearts are darkened by the Devil's domain. We can discern the truth of whether someone is truly a believer by his attitude to the truth.

Principle: There is an affinity between God's people and God's Word.

Application: The world system and God each have their own followers with corresponding empathy. These are the two characteristic spirits or empathies of our age. There is a spirit of error and there is the spirit of truth. Fellowship of the world revolves strictly around race, face and place of the satanic world system. Fellowship with God revolves around an affinity with grace.

True or genuine believers have positive volition toward what God says in His Word. They have an affinity with the voice of His grace.

John 10:4, "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but

will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... 8 "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them."

John 10:16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

John 10:26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.'"

We are either "of the world" or "of God". We cannot truly love God as long as there is one ounce of false teaching in our soul. The status of the believer is forever "of God". The true believer always responds to the truth of God found in the Word of God.

John 8:47 "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

By this

This phrase refers to the previous part of the verse. We can distinguish truth and error from the special revelation of God's Word. To those who know the Word, divine revelation is a self-evident fact.

we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error

It is important to distinguish between truth and error. Those with the "spirit of error" do not respond to the truth; they do not hear the Bible as God's Word. Those with the "spirit of truth" have God's truth at heart. The Bible is characteristically their criterion of truth. They will acknowledge that Jesus came out of heaven as the Son of God and stepped foot in the flesh.

Principle: Protection from error is found in loyalty to the criterion of truth in God's Word.

Application: Men of our day ever learn but cannot come to conclusions about the truth because they cannot accept the idea that there are absolutes. Finite man cannot come to infinite truth autonomously. He needs God and he needs a revelation of God in the Bible. Christians come to truth through the self-evident Word of God.

2 Tim. 3:7 " ...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

2 Peter 2:2 “And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

The Word of God calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth”. The Holy Spirit is truth and He imparts truth. We secure protection from error in loyalty to the truth from the Spirit of truth (2:7, 24; 3:11; 2 John 5, 9).

John 14:16 “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – 17 “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

John 16:13 “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

1 John 4:7

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

We come now to the third and final development of the nature of true love (2:7□11; 3:11□18). With each advance of the subject of love, the subject becomes more searching.

There is a correlation between love and belief. A person truly born of God loves like God loves. From 4:7 to 5:5, John weaves together the ideas of love, belief and righteousness. We cannot separate these ideas from each other in the Christian faith.

Beloved,

John addresses his comments to believers, believers of all kinds, whether carnal or spiritual. He punctuates this epistle with the word “beloved”. His readers are “beloved” regardless of their spiritual condition. God expects those He loves to love others.

John is in the process of refuting false doctrine so that his readers in Asia Minor might have a clear

idea of biblical love. If they understand divine love they will have a fulfilling Christian life.

Principle: Divine love flows from the divine nature.

Application: Pure emotional love is superficial love; true love results in true knowledge. You must get to know a girl if you are going to love her properly.

Many groups in evangelical circles today argue that we should put up with false doctrine by “loving one another”. This idea is love based on unadulterated emotionalism. Unadulterated emotional love without truth is the enemy to biblical love. Biblical love is based on truth. False doctrine obscures truth, erases truth. It is impossible for any believer to love with divine love as long as they are under a system of false doctrine. “True truth”, as Francis Schaeffer used to say, is what is most beneficial for our lives.

Much of what we hear today about love is hot air. Some say, “Oh how I love God”, but they know very little about God. That is maudlin sentimentality. It does not mean a thing to God. As we cannot love someone fully without knowing him so we cannot love God without knowing Him.

They might as well say, “I love a king cobra”.

Many Christians claim superficial love but they don’t know the first thing about biblical love. They do not comprehend biblical love because they do not understand biblical principles. They know little of Jesus’ person and work. When a false teacher comes down the pike with maudlin sentimentality, they buy into it hook, line and sinker because they do not have the doctrinal foundation to ward him off. They operate on the superficial principle of attraction rather than the sound principle of character.

Many marriages end in disaster because they based their marriage on attraction rather than more important underlying factors for marriage. Sooner or later the attraction palls away. Antagonism or indifference then replaces attraction. Attraction means that you do not truly know the person.

Love means that we care about the person we love with all their quirks and faults. We love them although we know everything about them. This is

love from stability. Mature believers distinguish between different kinds of loves.

let us love one another,

John develops the motif of “love one another” in verses 7-12. The words “one another” mean one another of the same kind. This refers to love among believers because they have reciprocal capacity for love. They have the love of God in them and find that same love in genuine believers. Without the love of God, human love is strictly human compatibility.

The formula “love one another” occurs five times in this epistle (3:11, 23; 4:7, 11,12).

Principle: Christians are to reciprocate the love of mutual relationship.

Application: God expects Christians to reciprocate His love by loving other Christians. This is because the very source of love is God Himself. As a logical corollary to God’s love, Christians should love one another

People hate under guises, “I am praying for your spiritual growth”. They hate and despise you but they say they are praying for you! This is a person with a soul kink. However, a Spirit filled believer has the capacity to love the nitpicker. If we love God, we will love all believers.

There are always those people in every congregation that you do not like. You like to pour others into a mold. The more unstable we are the more pushy we get, so even if people do not fit our mold, we try to squeeze them into it. This is arrogance and pride. People need my perspective on life. God needs my help in straightening out people I don’t like. This thinking does not love one another because true love is free from envy or pride.

Just because we love our father or mother does not mean that we love with divine love. Those who walk in the Spirit love from a supernatural love. They will love the unlovely in the family of God. Love is only potential until we actively love with God’s love.

for love is of God;

True love finds its origin in God and derives it from Him. We cannot love with the standard of God’s love without the filling of the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit is the true source of love.

Love for God means that we love all genuine Christians. Christians love because it is their spiritual nature to love. We are able to love because we are born of God.

Christians should love one another for two reasons: 1) love is of God, and 2) God is love (next verse). The nature of Christian love flows out of the God of love.

Principle: The nature of Christian love flows out of God’s love.

Application: Since love is from God who is the source of love, the best thing that we can do is go back to the source. Each believer is a responder to God. God first loves us then we send love back to Him. Before our love reaches out to anyone, it first goes up to God. When it goes up to God, God gives it a strength or power and then we extend it to the human race. That is the circuit of love.

Every Christian has two kinds of love operating inside them. They have their human love and then they have God’s love. Divine love extended through the believer toward other Christians comes from God Himself.

The Holy Spirit produces this love. Human love can take the form of a very pleasing personality. They never buck the tiger. They are always sweet and nice. They always yield to other people (at least publicly). They show a mouth full of teeth when relating to others. Sweetness is not the same as spirituality. Many people buy into this sweetness and confuse it with the real thing.

If you love God you will love all believers. Let’s say someone maligns another believer, and you get on the bandwagon and you malign him also. But if you are spiritual, your attitude should be the same toward a carnal believer as toward a spiritual believer. We have our molds and we want to fit people into those molds. The more unstable we are the more pushy we become. When we criticize and malign and run down others we imply, “God really needs my help, I’ll straighten out that person”. God doesn’t need our help to straighten out others.

Gal. 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

The dynamics of biblical love relate closely to the filling of the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is crucial to the process of absorbing the principles of the Word. Conversely, as we absorb the Word, we walk in the Spirit more consistently and we love more powerfully. The believer with this dynamic is a balanced, solid Christian. He is strong and stable with great inner animation. He is free from malice and bitterness. He finds no need to down other Christians.

The Spirit filled believer does not operate with a priggish, self-righteous attitude toward others. He loves everyone the same. He loves the carnal Christian as much as the spiritual Christian. This is not Pollyanna love that gushes and bleeds all over people. No, it is divine love originated in God Himself.

Let us presume that you are a very critical person. You are a Christian working in an office with many non-Christians. You run down your colleagues and undermine the policies of the company. You constantly and consistently demonstrate this attitude. If this is the case then your testimony will be in the pits. No one will respond to your message. You will not have impact for Christ because everyone will see you for what you are. If you start walking in the Spirit and stop nitpicking and criticizing everyone in sight then people will ask what happened to you. They will eventually respond to your gospel message.

and everyone who loves is born of God

When God puts us into His family, He puts us there forever. The tense of the words "is born" means that from the point we received new birth, God makes our spiritual birth permanent [perfect tense]. The person born spiritually (with lasting effect, not again and again) has a lasting and permanent relationship that goes on forever with the Lord.

God is the One who did the birthing [passive voice]. We do nothing to put ourselves in the family of God so regardless of whether we are carnal or spiritual, we belong to the family of God forever. Love originates from our new birth. As receivers of God's love, God expects us to radiate His love to other believers.

Principle: As recipients of God's love, God expects us to radiate His love to others.

Application: God loves us regardless of our spiritual condition. His love is unconditional with no strings attached. God's love for us never changes because He is immutable in His character. God loves us on the basis of who He is, not on the basis of who we are.

What passes off for love today is two emotionally unstable people trying to lean on each other. Each is more concerned about his own problems rather than reaching out to the other. Strong people can love strongly. Weak people love weakly.

Absence of any capacity to love with divine love is evidence that that person is not born again or that he is in a condition of carnality. Both non-Christians and carnal Christians can love with human love but they cannot love with divine love. Divine love does not operate by the concept of a mutual admiration society mode of operation.

Making clucking noises is not biblical love. This is a lonely-hearts club with all its attending power lust and hustling in the fraternity. We no longer have a church with this mode of operation but people trying to gain the approbation of others in the group. Churches today are being converted into mutual admiration societies. There is no difference in this case between a church and a fraternity.

Many people are incapable of love because their love is no stronger than their capacity for love. A person of vast capacity can love powerfully. A person of weak capacity does not have much ability to love especially under duress.

The best thing we can do for our mate is to acquire the capacity for love. The best thing that a person can do for their marriage is to develop personal maturity. This kind of person does not get hurt over even significant wrongs. A person with small capacity of soul gets hurt over the least problem.

Two believers out of fellowship might have strong compatibility between them. They may pass this off as spirituality but it is simply two people with emotional maturity and great compatibility. In the final analysis, it boils down to mutual admiration. The believer in fellowship produces a love that transcends human love.

and knows God

There is a definite relationship between the filling of the Spirit and fellowship with God. The word “knows” conveys the idea of a fellowship of communion. The Greek word for “know” is to know experientially. We can learn about relating to God when the Holy Spirit fills us. We can absorb the truth of who God is; He is a God of love.

Principle: The believer in fellowship with God loves with a love not natural to him; he loves with God’s love.

Application: The believer in fellowship shows love not natural to him. It is a love that proceeds from his faith and walk with God. Any so-called walk with God that does not love with God’s love is not born out of fellowship with God.

Divine love comes only through the filling of the Spirit and knowledge of truth. A carnal Christian does not love with knowledge of the Word because he is not consistently in the Word. Almost all we know of God is found in the Scriptures so we cannot love God unless we understand Him. Some people cannot discern a creep from a noble person. Experiential knowledge of the Word [the ability to apply principle to experience] enables the spiritual believer to love with God’s love.

1 John 4:8

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

He who does not love

John does not state here the object of love but the mere fact of love. The issue is simply whether a Christian loves or not.

does not know God,

Lack of love shows that this believer does not have intimate fellowship with God. This person may be a Christian but he is not connecting with the nature of God’s love. He is not filled with the Spirit. God assumes that anyone who knows Him will love.

for God is love

The phrase “God is love” only occurs here and verse 16 in the Bible. This phrase affirms a condition about the nature of God, all that God does is love. If He provides, He provides in love; if

He judges, He judges in love. Love is inherent in the nature of God; it is at the heart of all God is.

It is not possible to reverse “God is love” to “love is God”. Love is of God but love and God are not the same thing. God is more than love but the essence of His character revolves around love. Additional to love and among other things, God is also truth, justice, righteousness and longsuffering.

Principle: True love comes from capturing an understanding of the nature of God’s unilateral and unconditional love.

Application: The idea “God is love” is one of the most weighty but at the same time widely misused phrases in Scripture. People use it in a sense that strips God of righteousness and justice. This is an extremely dangerous idea and people believe it at their own peril.

God will not say to those who do not believe in Christ, “Oh, I will let you into my heaven because I have a soft and tender heart”. God cannot compromise with sin because He cannot compromise His own absolute righteousness.

God is love but love is not God. The thought that love is God is a lie of the Devil. The Devil would love to distort the very nature of God. God is more than love; He is truth, justice, longsuffering, and has many other attributes. God’s love does not revoke His truth. God will never fellowship with anyone who has not been forgiven through the blood of Christ. His perfect righteousness makes fellowship with any other kind of righteousness mutually exclusive.

God’s love is an attribute of His essence; it is more than a characteristic of God. Men possess love characteristically but only God is love essentially. God’s love is more than an expression of love toward us; it is His character and nature to extend unconditional love. Love is more than a quality of God’s being but an essence of who He is. God is more than loving activities; love is at His very essence.

God’s love is not conditional, it does not depend on the worthiness of the object of His love. We can never earn or deserve His love. God loves us unconditionally because that is His very nature.

Love is not merely an aspect of God's character floating out on the edge of His being.

God's love does not depend on any worth in us because there is nothing worthy in us for God to love. God's love rests on God's character. God unilaterally loves us when we are loveable and He loves us when we are not loveable.

The only way we can share God's love is to be a part of the family of God. We receive God's love by accepting God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. His death paid fully and sufficiently for our sins.

1 John 4:9

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

We find the proof of God's unilateral and unconditional love in His sending His Son into this world to die for our sin.

In this

This phrase refers to what follows. John shows how the nature of God's love exhibits itself in concrete fashion.

the love of God was manifested toward us,

God's love for His Son existed for all eternity but He manifested His love for us by sending His Son to earth to die for our sins. God now shows how He demonstrates His love. His best demonstration is in sending His Son to die for our sins. God's love is not motivated by any worthiness in us (Ro 5:5-9) but by His own character.

that God has sent

God "sent" His Son into the world. The word "sent" carries the idea of sent on a mission. God sent His Son on the special mission to pay for our sins (John 3:17,34; 5:36-37; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 17:3,18; 20:21). The act of sending God's Son into the world was no passing act of sentimentality.

This phrase does not imply that Jesus was reluctant to come into the world to die for our sins. He was willing to come (Ro 5:8).

Principle: The standard of God's love is ultimate sacrifice.

Application: We measure the standard of God's love by the extent to which He loved us. He loved

us to the point of sacrificing His Son on the cross for our sins. This is far more than a warm feeling toward us; it is a sacrificial action.

You can love people you dislike. You can love people with whom you disagree. The Bible does not say that you have to agree with all Christians but God does say that you do have to love them. God sets the pace of sacrificial love. God's love could not be demonstrated without sacrifice on His part. We show love especially when we sacrifice for one another. When we sacrifice our pride or time for someone else, we demonstrate that God's love resides in us.

God's love for us enables us to love others. Most of us are selfish. We love ourselves and do not give ourselves for others. We do not have time for others. We do not want to bother with other people's problems, "I have enough problems of my own".

His only begotten Son into the world,

The words "only begotten" pertain to what is unique in the sense of being the only one of the same kind or class - unique. The Son is one of a kind. He is the great unlike, incomparable to anyone else.

God calls His Son "only begotten" five times in the New Testament. All five times occur in John's writings, four in the gospel of John and once in his first epistle. "Only begotten" speaks of Jesus' uniqueness rather than His origin. Jesus is the one-of-a-kind agent of the Father and the Father's plan for salvation. God did not have another Son.

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The Lord is called "His own Son" twice in Romans 8:3,32.

Matt. 3:17 "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Matt. 17:5 "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Col. 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love..."

Principle: The Son of God is the Great Unlike.

Application: The greatness of God's gift to us lies in the fact that He gave His "only begotten Son" for our redemption. The "only begotten Son" expresses the Son's eternal union with the Father and inexpressible intimacy and love between the Father and Son. The Son shares all the Father's viewpoints and affections.

Jesus did not become the "only begotten Son" in the Incarnation. He was and is eternally the only begotten Son. God revealed His character and will fully in Jesus Christ. There never has been nor will ever be a person like the Son of God.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

that we might live through Him

The word "that" expresses purpose. Without God's purpose of sending His unique Son, the one-and-only Son, into the world to save us, we would be spiritually lost and subject to the Second Death, eternal death.

John sets the word "live" in stark contrast to the idea of spiritual death. God loved us so that we could experience eternal life, His life. God loved us that we might eternally live. Physical life came through creation but spiritual life comes through the death of Christ.

Principle: God fully manifested His unconditional love to us at Calvary.

Application: The full manifestation of God's love is Calvary. We need no more proof than this. We can see God's love clearly in the cross. The motive for our love is this love of God. Whoever loves like God loves, proves that he is a child of God.

1 John 4:10

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

In this is love,

God took the initiative to reach out in love to us. This model for our love is a model of initiative in sacrifice.

not that we loved God,

It is not our nature to spontaneously love God or others. We do not love God in an unsolicited manner. We did not take the initiative in love, God did. Love begets love. God's love causes a reply of love in us.

but that He loved us

The word "but" shows strong contrast. The word "us" is emphatic and stands in contrast to another emphatic term "He". Love for God never originates in man but always in God. God sought us; we did not seek Him.

and sent His Son

God took action in loving us. He sent His Son to die on the cross. His love was not in response to man's love but was initiated wholly within Himself. It was His plan from eternity to do this.

to be the propitiation

The only two instances of "propitiation" are in this verse and 2:2. There is another word for propitiation.

"Propitiation" means expiation. On occasion, it means satisfaction or mercy seat. The Old Testament sets forth the idea of "propitiation" in the sense of atonement or covering of sins by sacrifice to free a person from sin. God transferred the penalty of sins to the animal sacrifice. God removes our guilt by sacrifice. The judgment of God on Christ at the cross appeases His wrath against the one who accepts Christ's suffering for sin.

Jesus was the only one who could satisfy the demands of a perfect God. Jesus satisfied God by dying in our place and taking our eternal punishment on the cross.

Principle: Divine love takes the initiative to love others.

Application: God's love cannot contradict His justice. God is perfect and absolute righteousness. He can never oppose who He is. He cannot wink at our sins. He will not sweep them under the rug. God is no crooked divine dealer in the sky.

Someone had to pay the price for sin. The only person who could satisfy a holy God was Jesus Christ. His death on the cross satisfied the justice of God. That was an exorbitant price to pay; He paid top dollar for our sins - His very own life.

God does not save us by the life of Christ but by the death of Christ. We do not become Christians by following Jesus' example. We become Christians by accepting His death in place of our eternal death. Only Christ's death can satisfy an absolutely holy God.

for our sins

Jesus is the substitute sacrifice for our sin.

Principle: Jesus took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Application: Jesus took our hell that we might have His heaven. He personally paid the penalty for the sin we committed.

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

1 Cor. 15:3 "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..."

Gal. 1:3 "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 2:24 "...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might

bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit..."

God's way of salvation pivots on the substitution of Christ's death for our eternal death. He took our eternal death that we might have His eternal life. We receive His eternal life by trusting His death to forgive our sins.

Gal. 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

1 John 4:11

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

Beloved,

This is the sixth and last time John uses "beloved" for his readers. John as well as God loved John's readers.

if God so loved us,

God's example of love should set an example for the believer's love for Christians. The "if" in the Greek assumes that John's readers agreed with the reality of God's love for them. This "if", or better, "since", refers back to verse ten.

1 John 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The word "so" is just as broad as John 3:16. How robust, how strong is God's love in sending His Son to die for us? There is no way to measure it. Nothing men did or said about God changed God's love for them.

Principle: Christians stand under a moral necessity to love like they are loved.

Application: Nothing men did or said about God changed God's love for them. Jesus cried out on

the cross, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do! (Luke 23:34). This is not normal operating procedure for love; this is divine love.

If we clearly see the extent of Jesus' love on the cross for us, we cannot help but love fellow Christians. Jesus loved us when we were not lovely so we should love Christians who are not lovely. This is not an easy task because some Christians are jerks. Jesus sacrificed Himself for sinners, not saints. This is radical love. It is easy to love attractive and likable people but not very easy to love unattractive people with human love; it requires divine love.

Radical love requires the presence of God's love in us. We need to be born spiritually to have capacity to love like this. Unless we possess God's life, we cannot live like Him. Unless we know something about God's love, we cannot love like Him. All other love falls short of divine self-sacrificing love. We love with the attitude of a sinner saved by grace, "I do not deserve God's love but He loved me anyway. My fellow Christian does not deserve my love but I love him anyway".

This kind of love does not love on the surface. It does not give the appearance of love but loves whether anyone sees our love or not. This is a love beyond natural faculty. This love does not cut people down but endures their idiosyncrasies. People with God's life can love with God's love.

All lame excuses for not loving others will not stand the scrutiny of God's unconditional, unalterable, inimitable love for sinners. Operating under this kind of love, we cannot say, "I can't love that jerk. If you knew him like I know him, you would see why I can't love him". God loved us with all our sins, quirks, distortions and rationalization, so we should love those with the same failures. Lame imitations cannot fake this kind of love.

we also ought to love one another

An onus falls on those who are the recipients of God's love. How can a Christian not love someone God loves? God's love is a motivation for love of fellow Christians. It is incumbent upon us to love as Jesus loved. None of us has gone to the extent of the cross for others. The very nature of the cross is selflessness. If God loved us without our loving

Him, then we ought to love others without their loving us.

The word "ought" is a contraction of two English words: owes it. We owe love to fellow Christians for God's sake and for the sake of His love for us. We ought to serve them and minister to them. There is no question that the believer falls under a moral obligation to love fellow Christians. This is the third time we have met this word "ought."

1 John 2:6 "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

1 John 3:16 "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Principle: If God loved us without our loving Him, then we ought to love others without their loving us.

Application: Every Christian is under a divine and moral obligation to love other Christians. This is not manufacturing emotions by operation bootstraps but an attitude of grace that shows itself by extending an act of grace to another Christian. You forgive their wrong against you. You extend a helping hand in the face of their wrong against you.

Rom. 13:8 "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."

The word "ought" suggests the idea of duty. Some Christians think that the principle of grace does not put someone under any obligations at all. This is error. Response to grace catalyzes Christians to do what they ought to do such as love fellow Christians.

Rom. 1:14 "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise."

1 John 4:12

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

No one has seen God at any time.

No one has ever seen God except through theophanes (physical manifestation of God). Each theophany was a manifestation of Christ in pre-incarnate form. No one can see God since God is a spirit (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16). No one can see

His essential being. We did not see the essence of God in the humanity of Christ.

John 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

1 Tim. 1:17 "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

1 Tim. 6:16 "...who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

If we love one another, God abides in us,

When Christians meet their moral obligation to love other Christians, God the Father abides or dwells in them. This is how we see God working in our day. Others see God by our love.

God's love springs from fellowship with God. When God takes up residence in the believer, everyone can see it. Love is a manifestation of divine habitation. It is the Holy Spirit demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit in the life of the believer. God lives in the believer who loves other Christians.

and His love has been perfected in us

Our love is imperfect but God's love is perfect. God sheds abroad His love in us when we believe (Ro 5:8). It is not our love for God that God perfects but His love perfected in us. His love answers to His nature. God's love can reach God's goal for us in this life.

The word "perfected" means to reach a goal, to accomplish a purpose. God can complete His love in us in time. When Christians reach out in love to each other, God's love reaches its goal in their lives. God's kind of love can be fully expressed in our lives. It reaches its fulfillment in us. God's love is visible through Christians.

Principle: Christians make the inscrutable God scrutable through loving one another.

Application: A direct result of our love for other Christians is a manifestation of God's love.

Matthew knew that the publicans were thieves. If tax collectors can love people that love them, that is of no moment. They love their mothers, wives and children. However, to love those who do not reciprocate our love is divine love. True love loves

whether anyone returns love or not. People with divine love have a capacity to love anyone.

Matt. 5:46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

We cannot manifest God by showing His essence to people because He is a spirit. We see God best in the act of love. Love will reach its final destination or end when it reaches out to others. We see God's love best in Jesus' sacrifice and in our sacrificial love. This sacrificial love makes God visible.

1 John 4:13

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

Dwelling in love means that a person is in fellowship with God (4:13-17). John now turns from a warning against believing just any spirit (4:1-6) and the appeal to love one another (4:7-12) to personal application of living life by the power of the Spirit of God (4:13f).

By this we know that we abide in Him,

The believer has assurance that he is in fellowship with the Lord [abides] because of the Spirit whom He gave us. Abiding is synonymous with knowing Christ (2:24-25).

and He in us,

There is a mutual indwelling. We dwell or abide in God and He abides in us. God fellowships with us when we allow Him to control our lives.

because He has given us of His Spirit

The reference here is not to the gift of the indwelling Spirit at the instant we became Christians but rather to the manifestations of the Spirit in our lives. The Greek for "of" in the phrase "of His Spirit" indicates the product of participation in the Spirit's presence. Love is a grace that flows from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit assures us of our fellowship with God when we love one another.

Principle: Love is the authenticating test of the Holy Spirit producing fruit in us.

Application: Spirit-fellowship producing divine love in us is evidence of fellowship with God. The love we manifest to other Christians is an outcome

of the gift of the Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit is the source of the believer's love just as He is the source of our application of truth to experience (3:23-24).

1 John 3:24 "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

On the Day of Pentecost God poured out His Spirit on the church and on each individual believer. He made the things of Jesus real to the believer. He made the love of God real to us.

Rom. 5:5 "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

The outpouring of love from the Spirit assures us that we habitually abide in fellowship with God.

1 John 4:14

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."

And we have seen

John and the apostles saw and testified of the Son of God's presence in time on earth. The words "have seen" mean that the apostles steadfastly and deliberately contemplated the presence of the incarnate Christ on earth, the Son of God in incarnation. It was not simply a moment in time but a process of seeing and testifying.

and testify

The apostles gave continuing testimony to the incarnate Christ.

that the Father has sent the Son

John puts stress upon Jesus as the Son. The Son was the Son before He came into the world. He always was the eternal Son of God. He did not become the Son at Bethlehem.

as Savior of the world

Jesus was the Savior of the world, not merely the elect. Jesus came to the world as "Savior", not as a social worker. There are only two instances where the New Testament calls Jesus the "Savior" (here and John 4:42). All people are savable (2:2).

John 3:17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

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

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

1 John 4:15 "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

Principle: Salvation in Christ is the foundation to dynamic living in Christianity.

Application: Salvation in Christ is the foundation to dynamic living in Christianity. Faith in Christ produces love to God and love to God ignites love for Christians. As God showed His love toward us in Christ, we are to show love to those who love Him.

Do you know the Son of God as your Savior? I am not asking do you know Him as an example or moral teacher. Do you know Jesus as the only One who can save you from your sins? Before you meet God, you must have a Savior to save you from your sins.

1 John 4:15

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

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God,

Confession is one condition for abiding. The basic idea of confession is agreement, to say the same thing. "Confess" is made up of two Greek words: to say and same. We agree or make a compact with God about His Son.

Confession is a synonymous term with faith. Confession that Jesus is "the Son of God" means acknowledgement that He is God. The Greek tense in "confess" means that this person comes to a decisive moment when they acknowledge Him as the Son of God (aorist). Confession of the deity of Christ implies surrender to His character and authority.

There is a connection between confession in verse 2 and the confession here. Confession in verse 2 has to do with the genuine humanity of Christ. Confession of that differentiates true believers from the fakers. Here confession has to do with the confession of His deity, the fact that He is the Son of God. Confession in this verse serves to differentiate between those who give evidence of love and those who do not. In each case, the Holy Spirit produces the confession.

God abides in him,

1 John says six times that God abides in us. Five times it says that we abide in Him. Confession of Jesus as the Son of God and divine love operating in the believer has a clear relation. Without the manifestation of the Son of God to the world, there would be no divine love in the world.

Principle: Confession is more than proclamation of doctrine; it is a voucher of a life united with God.

Application: There is a very close correlation between what we believe and what we do. Confession is more than profession. Many people confess Christ but they have never trusted Him as their personal Savior.

Rom. 10:8 "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'"

The implication of the confession that Christ is the Son of God is that He is the sovereign Lord over our lives. He is God Almighty to us. He imparts His life to us called eternal life. The nature of that life changes the individual. He abides in the believer and so changes his perspective on love. Love finds its source in faith in the Son of God.

God's love does not see others as obstacles or neutral objects but people worthy of His attention. God's proof of this is the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross for our sins. True love shows itself in concrete action.

and he in God

Those who meet the condition for abiding will abide in God and God in Him. That one condition is the confession of personal trust in the Son of God and His finished work on the cross. God only lives inside saved people. He does not fellowship with those without Christ.

Principle: God exclusively fellowships with saved people.

Application: We need to remind ourselves that we are children of the King. We dwell in God. We have right and prerogative with God. We sit in the heavens with Christ. We hold the same position as Jesus holds with the Father.

Eph. 1:6 "...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

God does not punish me for my sins. He does not get even with me. Jesus took the punishment for my sin so God does not condemn me (Ro 8:1). I do not deserve this. Jesus provided eternal credit for me before God. Jesus took my eternal punishment for my sins.

Since God abides in the believer, the believer is never alone. This is great encouragement in time of sorrow. He never forgets us or leaves us alone.

1 John 4:16

"And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

This verse summarizes 3:24-4:16 -- intimate fellowship with God is impossible without love for fellow Christians.

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

Notice the order of "have known and believed." We must first hear the gospel before we can believe it. By the same token, we must know God's love before we can believe God's love for us. Those who experience God's love come to have confidence in His love. Confidence in God's love comes from knowledge about His love.

God is love,

John parlays his discourse of the doctrine of Christ into a discussion of God's love and Christian love.

This is a logical deduction from the nature of God, from His orientation to love. God is unconditional, incomprehensible, incomparable love. We see this clearly in the sacrifice of His Son for our sins.

John previously used the phrase "God is love" in verse 8 to make a case for loving fellow Christians. He reiterates the truth that "God is love" here to show the close connection between fellowship with God and loving fellow believers. Only by abiding in God's love can true fellowship with Him be made real. Both verses connect to the idea that God sent His Son into the world (4:8,9 and 4:14,16). God reveals His love through Jesus Christ. God sending His Son is proof of His love for us and the execution of that love in us.

and he who abides in love abides in God,

There is a close correlation between loving Christians and fellowship with God. Since God in His essence is love, where God is, love is. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

and God in him

God's love operates within the sphere of the believer. John is confident that God's love works in Christians, as they love one another. If God dwells in a believer, love dwells there too. The doctrine of God indwelling the believer also implies love indwelling the believer. There is an indwelling love that God imparts to every believer.

Principle: There is a great reciprocity between God's love and the loving believer.

Application: Where God's is, His love is. Love always flows from fellowship with God. God works in Christians as they love one another. We cannot fellowship with God if we harbor malice toward fellow Christians.

All Christians are indwelt by God so all believers are indwelt by love. God indwelling the believer is tied inseparably to confession of Christ as God, as the Son of God. A domino effect occurs from belief - belief results in God's indwelling the believer and God's indwelling produces dynamic love in the Christian.

We must first know the love of God before we can believe the love of God. This is another way of saying that when we experience the love of God, we know something of how to love others.

It is possible by unbelief to block in advance, appreciation of God's love. Knowledge and belief act and react with each other. Any truth not applied to experience is worthless. God's Word must both be known and believed to be effective. Belief without knowledge is unadulterated gullibility.

1 John 4:17

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world."

John now turns to the consequences of intimate fellowship with God (vv. 17-19). He sets this forth in positive terms in verse 17 and in negative terms in verse 18.

Love has been perfected among us in this:

God perfects His love among us. Love reaches its intended goal when it engages in active love towards others. God's love finds fulfillment in reproducing itself in the conduct of His children. We do not reach perfection in our love on earth but love can reach God's intended goal for us. This is then the love God produces in the process of abiding in the believer. Through His love He moves the believer to love others.

Principle: Christians who exercise love from the filling of the Spirit can have confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Application: When God sees His love completed in us by showing love to other Christians, He perceives a likeness to how His Son operated on earth in time. He observes the character of Christ in us. The Father said that He was well pleased with Jesus on earth. God calls on each member of His family to bear His family characteristic. God expects us to love His people.

God's love can only be consummated in us as He works in company with or in association with us to extend love to others. Fellowship with God causes us to abide in His love. These kinds of Christians will hold nothing back out of shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God's love makes it possible for Christians to have boldness in the day of judgment.

1 John 4:9 "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His

only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

1 John 4:12 "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

John 13:1 "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."

that we may have boldness

The word "that" indicates purpose. The person who engages in fellowship with the Lord by loving fellow Christians will have confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Boldness" means confidence (2:28). This believer will have freedom in the presence of God because he has nothing to hide nor does he have any shame. The word "have" conveys present possession. We have boldness now about the future judgment. We can have "boldness" at the Judgment Seat of Christ if we trust God's love for us.

in the day of judgment;

The "day of judgment" is the Judgment Seat of Christ and not the Great White Throne judgment. The Great White Throne judgment is for non-Christians. The Judgment Seat of Christ is the place of evaluation of the effectiveness of the Christian life. There is no punishment at this judgment because Jesus took all the punishment for every Christian.

However, God will evaluate the works of Christians at the Judgment Seat of Christ for rewards. If Christians walk in fellowship in time by manifesting love to other Christians, they can have confidence in the "day of judgment" that God will reward them.

Principle: Confidence about reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ revolves around our fellowship with God in time.

Application: Spirit-filled Christians can have confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Co. 3:12-15; 2 Co. 5:10). The believer who does not walk in the Spirit consistently will receive no or little reward at the Judgment Seat.

Thank God that the Christian will never go to court to be tried as a candidate for hell. His case

was settled out of court. Jesus paid the price for his sin. His case will never come before the Father. The Christian has boldness for the future because he knows that his case will never come up at the Great White Throne judgment. His case was settled on the cross once for all. That is the good news of the gospel.

Rom. 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..."

The non-Christian will go on trial because he rejected God's solution to his sin problem.

Matt. 11:24 "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Matt. 12:36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."

Rom. 2:16 "...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

The non-Christian will receive judgment because since they rejected the punishment Christ took for their sins; they must bear the punishment themselves. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire eternally.

because as He is,

The ground of our confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ is who Jesus is and what He did for us on the cross. The Greek emphasizes "He". We could translate "He" as "that one". The Father was well pleased with the Son when He was on earth. This is not as Jesus was on earth but as He is in heaven. He is now in the closest fellowship of love with the Father.

Matt. 3:17 "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Matt. 17:5 "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

so are we in this world

Note the "as...so" connection between these two phrases. As Christ demonstrated love on earth so the Christian's love will give him cause to have

boldness at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The basis of our boldness is our likeness to Christ. In so far as we manifest God's love to others, there will be no blame in that day. We will stand there without reproach and regret.

Note that this is present tense, not future tense. We are like He is there over here. We are here just like He is there. He represents us there and we represent Him here. He is my assurance that I will have His heaven. He is already there making room for me. He is Himself the guarantee that I will be with Him.

Principle: We are here just like Jesus is there.

Application: God's love in communion with us attains its consummation in Christ's likeness. The reduplication of Christ's love in our lives ensures that we shall be beyond censure and rebuke at the Judgment Seat when it comes to rewards. The likeness here is not positional but practical and experiential. We are here just like Jesus is there. He represents us there. We represent Him here.

It is also true that we will have positional privilege before the Father at the Judgment Seat of Christ. As the Father was well pleased with the Son on earth so He will be well pleased with us at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We are also spiritually one with Christ. We stand at the judgment seat with all the authority of Christ. God will see us united to Him. As Jesus is removed from sin in glory so we are in this world.

If He represents us there like we represent Him here, there might be some doubt whether we would ever make it to heaven. Thank God that He represents us perfectly there.

He is my assurance that I will be with Him there because He is already there. He is my guarantee that I will be with Him one day. His ascension guarantees my ascension.

John 16:8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 "of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 "of righteousness, because I go to My Father [the ascension] and you see Me no more; 11 "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

1 John 4:18

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

Verse 18 gives proof of verse 17. We have boldness at the Judgment Seat of Christ because God completes His love in us. John now looks at love from the negative viewpoint.

There is no fear in love;

Love accomplishes something now. The Christian does not look to the Judgment Seat of Christ with trepidation because He understands God's love. Not only does love look forward to meeting the Lord but it presently casts out fear; love gives freedom from fear.

Fear and love are as contrary to each other as oil and water. Fear and love can coexist but perfect love and fear cannot coexist. Fear in varying degrees exists in every believer's life. This would not be the case if God's perfect love gripped his soul.

There is no room for fear in God's economy of love. We cannot approach God in love and hide from Him in fear simultaneously. We overcome cowering fear of God by an understanding of His perfect love for us.

Principle: Love is the most important manifestation of fellowship with the Lord.

Application: When the Christian manifests the Spirit filled life by loving other believers, he has no fear when anticipating the Judgment Seat of Christ. He knows that the Spirit is the controlling influence over his life. The believer out of fellowship torments his soul because he knows he is out of phase with God. Fear intimidates his soul with thoughts of meeting the Lord. On the other hand, the Christian in fellowship anticipates meeting the Lord at the Rapture.

Most people fear judgment. They also fear accountability to God. Non-Christians will face the Great White Throne judgment for rejecting Christ as their Savior. That will be an awful and dreadful day.

Heb. 9:27 "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He

will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

Jesus removed fear of judgment.

Heb. 2:14 "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

On the human level only total acceptance of another person will remove fear of rejection. For example, in marriage a love relationship that is free of fear is one where there is a commitment of total acceptance to one's mate. Total forgiveness is also necessary for a transparent relationship (Eph. 4:31-32).

God purposes that His children have confidence in His love. He does not want them to fear Him. Fear paralyzes our fellowship with God. God loves us with an everlasting love, an unconditional love. Nothing daunts or disturbs His love so we can fellowship with Him with confidence.

but perfect love casts out fear,

"Perfect love" is God's love, not our love. Only God has perfect love. This is the love made perfect in verse 17. However, God's love extends to the believer in fellowship. Perfect love begins with God who is love (4:8) and then reaches out to believers in fellowship (4:19). Believers in love with the Lord show the love that Christ has for them to others.

"Perfect" here does not mean "without flaw" but completion. The reference is to love that reaches a stage of completion; it is a mature love. Mature understanding of God's love casts out fear. Acceptance of God's perfect love does the work of God. It is a love that reaches the stage of completion. It is complete because it followed through to the production of loving. This love completed its intended course of reaching out rather than dying within the soul.

Fear is a self-centered function. Fear has no home in love because love is others-oriented. Perfect love casts out, throws out and ejects fear. It is either/or; love and fear are mutually exclusive. Where there is one the other is not. Love always

banishes fear. The presence of fear is an indication that love has not yet arrived.

Principle: God's love nourished in our soul indicates there can be no peaceful coexistence of love and fear.

Application: Where God's love is in the process of being completed in us, there is no room for fear. Where there is perfect love there is perfect confidence. Perfect confidence dispels fear. Perfect love places its trust in the perfect Christ. This trust does not lean on our love, for our ultimate security is in the love of God.

Love always dispels fear. Fears never originate in love. A wife does not fear her husband who loves her. His love protects her and gives her assurance that he cherishes her. God's love assures us that He will be faithful to His name. God's love for us expels our dread of Him.

because fear involves torment.

The perfected love in the believer is a love that resides in God's love, in mutual fellowship with the Lord. Love casts fear outside its sphere of influence. Fear is at variance with and contrary to God's love.

Fear has its own retribution. Fear is a unsettling passion that tortures itself. Love drives out this fear. When God's love develops in us, it expels fear of God's immediate interdiction or retribution. An unloving Christian experiences self-induced misery because he knows that he must face his carnality at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The believer who loves other Christians has no trepidation about meeting the Lord.

The Greek idea of "torment" is literally to cut short, punish, correct. The translation "torment" is too strong for the Greek word. Fear here is a state in the believer's life that is at variance with God's love and thus subject to corrective discipline. The one habitually characterized by servile fear is the opposite of the one applying God's love to his life so that he becomes mature in owning God's love.

The mere absence of fear proves nothing. Some people operate in brazen defiance, incorrigible ignorance, presumptuous unbelief and inexcusable indifference. This is not divine love.

Principle: Love displaces fear.

Application: There is no doubt that people fear judgment. They are afraid to render account to God. A person that grows into the maturity of God's love banishes fear from his life. Fear has a tendency to paralyze. Fear paralyzed Adam in Genesis.

Gen. 3:9 "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' 10 So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'"

Fear is the first penalty on the soul. It is the thing we suffer first when we step out of line with the Lord. It is the awareness that we are not in phase with the Lord.

The principle that love deposes fear is true on the human plane. Children who have assurance of their parents' love learn not to fear them. A wife who knows her husband loves her is not afraid of him. Love banishes fear. When you know God loves you, you no longer fear God, the future, death, eternity or judgment. However, if you do not know the love of God, then there is fear.

Fear comes from our own heart and not from God. Fear is the sentry of our soul that warns us that our soul is out of whack. It alerts us that our soul is not right with God. Love gives no warning signal to our soul because we know we are in fellowship with the Lord.

Fear imprisons us in anxiety and worry. It limits our lives. Fear immobilizes some people. They will not fly in a plane because of fear. Others will not venture into new business due to fear. Fear binds them from living for God as well. They do not enter into abundant living because Satan imprisoned their soul in abject fear.

But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

The love that erects confidence (4:17) also expels fears. God's love is amiable toward the believer because of Christ. The believer's love should be amiable toward fellow Christians because of their filial relation to Christ. Other Christians are worthy to be loved because of Christ.

If a person dreads the thought of judgment day, his life is not marked by the perfected love of God that expresses itself in concrete action. In other

words, he has no basis for assurance concerning his welfare when the Judgment Seat of Christ comes.

Principle: Love conquers fear.

Application: Fear is a feeling of anxiety caused by real or imagined danger. Fear can paralyze the believer making him incapable of doing the will of God. We conquer fear when we remember that God loves us (4:16,19).

That is the way with people who do not know the future. They just do not know the score. They would rather remain in the dark. Fear is a very real thing.

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Psalms 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Psalms 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Psalms 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah."

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

2 Tim. 1:7 "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Love that accomplishes its purpose casts out fear. It releases us from the bondage of fear. It frees us to engage others.

Hate is not necessarily the opposite of love. Fear can be the opposite of love. Love gives but fear protects. Love moves toward others but fear moves away. Fear is afraid of loss. Love is concerned with giving. Love does not cower in

fear. Love does not live a defensive life always avoiding and never risking. Love ever reaches out to others.

1 John 4:19

“We love Him because He first loved us.”

We love Him

God’s initiative in love for us stamped love in our spirits. Our ability to love with divine love comes from God, not us. We love because God taught us how to love with divine love. The source of the believer’s love is prior love. We do not love with our anemic love.

The word “Him” does not occur in the oldest manuscripts so the emphasis is on love generically, “We love because He first loved us”. Thus, this speaks of loving any object whether God or human beings.

because He first loved us

The word “first” bears the emphasis of this phrase. This word allows us to see the connection to the preceding verses. Fear finds no place in the Christian who matures in God’s love (4:18). Fear of God is incompatible with an understanding of God as the source and initiator of love. Our exercise of love is a product of God’s love.

John emphasizes the continued pattern of love rather than isolated acts of love. Since God loved us once [aorist tense] at the cross, we are able to go on loving Christians [present tense].

Principle: No exercise of love on our part is possible without God having loved us first.

Application: Our love for God and others originates in His love for us. God’s love is the incentive for our love. God loved us at the great cost of sacrificing His Son for us. God loved us first; we loved Him second. He took the initiative. His initiative enabled us to love because He put His love within us. He provided the loving apparatus.

2 Thess. 3:5 “Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.”

Omission of love on the human level is an indication of absence of love on the divine level. God’s love makes divine love on the human plane possible. All true love is a response to God’s

initiative. Our love is not self-originated for it has a divine origin. God Himself gives us the desire to love others. God calls out our love in response to what God has given. Our capacity to love spiritually rests on something greater than our personal power to love. It is the response to God’s perfect love. That is why this kind of love always finds an object.

Our love for fellow Christians validates our love for God. Response to God’s love produces love for others. Think of how cantankerous and cross-grained some Christians are. They will do almost anything to upset us. Yet God loves them as much as He loves us. When we occupy our hearts with His wonderful love toward us, we do not get hung up with obnoxious Christians. God loved us when we were unlovely; we love the unlovely as well.

1 John 4:20

“If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

John now demonstrates how to experience love.

If someone says, “I love God,”

In chapters one and two one we saw a number of false claims to spirituality (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9, 22; 5:10). Here in our verse is a false claim to love. This person professes to love God, however, it is completely inconsistent to claim to love God and simultaneously hate Christians.

The problem that John had with the false teachers was their disconnection of application of truth from the principles of God’s Word. They were great on talk but short on walk. They claimed to love God but they hated God’s people.

and hates his brother, he is a liar;

It makes little difference what a person claims about loving God, he lies about loving God if he does not love Christians. This is irresistible logic. The greater implies the lesser. Conversely, default in the lesser denotes the impossibility of the greater. One side of the coin cannot be true and the other side false. We do not love God if we do not love Christians.

The word “liar” occurs five times in 1 John (more than any other book). A “liar” is someone who

attempts to deceive by conveying misinformation. This is strong language intended to get attention. To claim to fellowship with God and walk in darkness is a lie (1:6; 2:4). The claim to believe in the Father and yet deny the Son is a lie (2:22,23). The claim to love God and not love Christians is a lie as well. These three lies constitute a spiritual lie, a doctrinal lie and a relational lie.

Notice that John uses "brother" twice in this verse. His reference is to loving fellow Christians. He uses "brother" twelve times in this epistle. Both "brother" and "brethren" occur a total of seventeen times in 1 John.

for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

Here is a hard question. How can we love God whom we have not seen if we do not love Christians who we can see? Love for the unseen God always finds manifestation in concrete love for Christians. One must always accompany the other.

Principle: There is an inviolable relation between God's love and our love.

Application: It is easier to love an observable human being than an invisible God. If we cannot deliver on the easier task, we will not do the harder task.

Profession of love for God does not mean that we truly possess love for Him. We need to guard against profession without reality. Profession of love without the reality of love shows that we do not truly understand nor experience God's love. We presume that we love but in fact we do not.

It is possible to claim to love God and not manifest that love toward Christians. Such pseudo spirituality falls short of true fellowship with God. Love for Christians is not optional but obligatory in God's economy. The practice of love originates in God Himself so if we are at odds with men, we are at odds with God.

When we profess love for God we also profess to love like He loves. Any other claim is a lie. We test our love for God by our love for Christians. It does not matter what we claim, if we do not love fellow believers, we are liars!

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

1 John 4:21

"And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

And this commandment we have

The idea of "commandment" is an injunction, charge, order, behest, precept. A "commandment" is equivalent to a principle or precept of the Word of God. It is a prescribe principle that accords with God's standards.

Love for God and love for fellow Christians form one single commandment (3:23). John explains the "commandment" by the next clause - "that he who loves God must love his brother also." God orders the Christian to love His people.

from Him:

Jesus Himself taught the two-fold commandment of loving both God and others (Matt. 22:37-40; John 13:34; Mk 12:29-31).

that he who loves God must love his brother also

We cannot separate love for God and love for Christians. Those two loves operate as one in God's economy. This idea is a summary of chapter four.

Principle: Love to other Christians is a binding principle for those who walk with God.

Application: God's commandments are not suggestions. There is no room for debate. We have no choice. There is no place for deliberation when it comes to God's commandments. It is God's will that the Christian correlate love for others with love for God.

Love for God orbits around His commandments, especially the precept of loving Christians. To violate the precept is not to love God. The commandment at minimum means that it is God's will that anyone who loves Him should also love His people. It is easy to pretend to love God whom men do not see since it is a sentiment that no one can verify.

The only way we can prove we have faith in Jesus is to love God's people. If we would be as careful to demonstrate our love one to another as we are to criticize one another, people would soon get the idea that we loved them. We do not have to agree with them, but we have to love them. We do not have to see eye to eye with all God's people but we do have to love them unconditionally.

A Christian who loves God always expresses that love to others in concrete terms. True love for God shows itself in more than sentimental, saccharine or subjective love. It is an objective love as well as a subjective love. Active love convinces our condemning heart that we are in tune with God. This gives us assurance that we are right with God.

1 John 5

1 John 5:1

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him."

The first twelve verses of chapter five set before us the witness of God. God bears clear testimony about His Son. John shows how the nature of one's faith gives significance to love.

The message of chapter five grows out of the end of chapter four.

1 John 4:20 "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ

Spiritual birth rests on belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Belief is the one and only condition for salvation. John refers to belief three times in this section (5:1,5,10). He follows this with three pronouncements:

- This is the victory (5:4)
- This is the testimony (5:9,11)
- This is the life (5:11)

The connection between belief and love brings John's argument to the point of his epistle. It involves love in the family of God.

The word "Christ" means Messiah, the anointed one. This name puts emphasis on His work, especially His work of shedding His blood for our sins. He bore our sins in death. Isaiah speaks of the Messiah in this regard in Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:5, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Gnostic heretics had a problem with identifying Jesus with the "Christ," the Messiah. Jesus is not only truly human but He is God Almighty.

John 20:30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

is born of God,

The phrase "born of God" occurs seven times in 1 John and three times in this verse (3:9; 4:7; 5:4,18). All born again people have the nature of God residing in them. This is the life of God. If we have the life of God in us, we will naturally love the family of God.

The tense of "is born" means that the child of God was spiritually born at a point in the past with the results continuing permanently.

Principle: The one and only condition for salvation is belief in the person and work of Christ for our sins.

Application: Many of us add many things to salvation according to the denomination to which we belong. Some say that a person must repent, be baptized or join a church to receive spiritual birth. This adds conditions to salvation that God does not. God's only condition for salvation is trust or belief in Jesus and His work.

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who

were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Read John 3:3-18

The next two phrases put belief and love in close connection. Divine life inevitably manifests itself in love for the family of God.

and everyone who loves Him who begot

Genuine love for God stimulates certain responses to His commandments. If a person loves God, he will love God's children (4:20,21). The believer loves the Lord and His family because the Lord provides regeneration for him.

also loves him who is begotten of Him

Christians should love God's family members, the family of God. Everyone who believes in the incarnation is a child of God. Every believer in the incarnation loves God and everyone who loves God loves the family of God. If God loves the believer, other believers should love that believer because he is in the family of God. You cannot love one without the other. If you love the parent, you love the child. Loving other Christians is evidence of the new birth. Every child of God is entitled to our love because he is birthed into God's family. He is God's visible representative on earth.

Principle: Like attracts like in the family of God.

Application: Like attracts like. Love starts in the family of God. If we tell a mother that we do not like her kids, we will have a problem with that mother. Love for the mother and love for the kids are a package deal. We cannot separate belief and love. One is the source of the other.

If we wish to show love to God, we should show it to God's visible agent, the child of God, a constituent member of His family. The reason why a fellow Christian is worthy of our love is that he possesses distinguishing features of the family of God, features that the non-Christian does not have.

Love for God shows itself in active love for the family of God, not just emotional love for them. We love other Christians best when we respond to God's love and command to love. Love for God and God's children is essentially obedience to God's commands. It is not so much how we feel

about God and other believers but how we choose to relate to them.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the common ground for all Christians. Race, place and face are a distant second to Him. It is very simple to test our love for God. How committed are we to fully apply His principles to our lives? That is the measure of our love. Fellowship with God carries power with it.

The person who puts his trust in Jesus Christ yields himself to God's principles and standards for life. He receives direction for life from his Parent. Operating out of the identity of the dignity of his spiritual family, he loves members of the family of God.

1 John 5:2

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

John reverses the sequence of 4:20,21 in this verse. In chapter four he put forth the idea that to love God is to obey Him. Here he says, "We love God when we love His children." When we put these two passages together, they show that love for God and love for the family of God are mutually vital to each other.

By this we know

We should translate this phrase this way, "By this we come to know." By ascertaining the following two facts, we can gain assurance that we love the family of God.

As love for fellow Christians is the test of our love to God, so our love to God is the test of love for fellow Christians. Conscious love for God is the inward spiritual criteria for whether we love the family of God. We gain assurance that we love God because we love fellow Christians; the reverse is also true, that we love Christians if we love God.

that we love the children of God,

Implicit in love for the family of God is love for God and keeping His operating principles for life. Love for God and love for the family of God works as a double-edged sword; it works both ways.

1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the

brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."

when we love God

The word "when" means whensoever. The idea points to every occasion we fulfill the two conditions of this verse. This is a general principle that applies to all occasions.

The Greek of "whensoever" is also definite, introducing a precise test. Each act of love to God from obedience to His commands forms new evidence of love for His children. This love is effective whenever the prescribed condition is fulfilled. Constant completion of love for God and applying His Word involves loving fellow Christians. As ever-new occasions present themselves, this offers new evidence that we love Christians.

Principle: Love for God and His Word is the evidence that we love the family of God.

Application: If we want to know whether we love fellow Christians, we need to ask ourselves if we love God and apply His principles to experience. The test of whether we love the family of God is whether we love God and His Word. Love is always faithful to God's principles.

Love willingly confronts Christians out of phase with God. True love does the best for the other person even though it may be a painful process. We do this by God's norms and not our personal preferences. This action may offend the other party. We may disagree with each other but disagreement does not mean that we do not love them. Love does the unpleasant thing because it operates on the higher plane of honoring God's principles above everything.

We know that we love God because we love the brethren. The reverse is also true, that we know we love Christians because we love God. This is set forth in the old spiritual: "Give me the old time religion, makes me love everybody". That is what happened to the Philippian jailor. When he was born again he took Paul and Silas out of jail and washed their stripes, brought them to his house and fed them.

And keep His commandments

The definitive twofold proof that we love God and His family is when we "love God and keep His commandments."

The word for "commandments" refers to the principles of God's Word (2:3,5). We apply God's Word to experience because we love God. We have to know before we believe. We cannot believe what we do not know. We cannot apply what we do not believe. We know first, believe second and act third. We do what we do because God said it. Because God said it, that makes it right.

"Commandments" are plural indicating the many principles of God's worldview. If we wish to find out whether we love God's family, we should ask ourselves if we love God's Word. If we wish to find out whether we love God, we must ask ourselves whether we execute His principles of life toward others (which is synonymous with loving God).

We know that we entered into eternal life because we love Christians (3:14). We know that we love God because we love the family of God. The reverse is also true. We know that we love Christians if we live under God's operating principles for life toward Christians. Implicit in love for God is the corollary of love for His people. This is a circular dynamic. If one love is present, the other love must be present as well.

Principle: Applying God's life principles in love to other Christians assures us that we operate in God's economy.

Application: Application of truth to experience is an indication that we belong to God: we love His people; we love His Word; we believe His Word and we obey His Word. Because God says it, we do it. Because God says it, that makes it right. It does not always follow that we understand everything in the Word of God. We believe even where we do not understand.

As our love for the people of God reflects our love for God (3:10, 17), so our love for God by the application of truth to experience is a manifestation of love to the family of Christ. Love for neighbor rests on love for God. Authentic love for God always results in love for His family. Each act of love to God out of application of truth to

experience is evidence of love for the family of God.

Jesus emphatically made the point in the Upper Room that love for God and His Word is evidence that we love the children of God.

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

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

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

Non-application of truth to experience is a sin against love. Profession of love for God and non-obedience to His truth is an expression of indifference toward God. John equates the two ideas of non-love toward Christians and non-application of God's Word to experience.

1 John 5:3

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

John folds three spiritual dynamics into one: 1) trust in the truth, 2) application of truth to experience and 3) manifestation of love for God. The believer who brings these dimensions together is a spiritual believer.

For this is the love of God,

The word "for" explains the preceding verse (5:2). Applying God's principles to experience is the key to knowing that we love God's family. Love in God's economy involves more than sentimental love; God's love revolves around His principles. "For" explains the substantiation that our love for God is synonymous with doing His commandments.

It is our love for God that is at issue here, and not God's love for us.

that we keep His commandments.

When we obey divine directives for our lives, we demonstrate love for God. Observation of God's commandments flows from loving Him. Keeping God's commandments maintains us in the sphere of His will because His commandments reveal His character.

2 John 6 "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it."

Principle: Christians apply divine directives to their lives because they love God.

Application: God's commandments reveal His nature. The believer shows God's character by applying God's Word to experience. Each time we apply the principles of God's Word to experience, we reveal God's glory.

It is possible to blaspheme God's love. If we claim to love God but live contrary to His principles, we blaspheme His name and detract from His glory. People will then speak against the Bible and against God's name because we do not live consistently with His truth. People will say that we are inconsistent.

Titus 2:5 "...to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

The Word of God is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is our compass, our plumb line for life and our measuring rod of truth. The Bible is our standard for living so there is no relative ethic in biblical Christianity. Relative ethics say that what is wrong in Canada may be all right in the United States or Europe. Biblical commands are always true in any culture of any age. They never change. They are the same in every period of history and in every society.

And His commandments are not burdensome

God's commandments are not irksome. The reason they are not irksome is because of our love for Him. It is not hard to obey someone you love.

The word "burdensome" means heavy, weighed down, grievous, oppressive, troublesome, cruel, severe, stern. God's commandments are not oppressive. The idea is not that God's commands

ask too much of us but that keeping them is an act of love. Legalism does, however, impose heavy burdens on believers.

Matt. 23:4 "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

God's commands are not oppressive since we execute them by love derived from faith (5:4). It is wonderful to serve the Lord under His operating grace. His yoke is easy and His burden light. God's Word always sets God's grace in contrast to legalism.

Matt. 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Principle: God's commands are not burdensome because we exercise them in love for God.

Application: The obligations of grace are infinitely more demanding than legalism. We could not keep them apart from the strength of the Spirit.

Love for God and other Christians should not be an oppressive command. Christians are members of our spiritual family. They are fellow believers (4:4).

Keeping God's principles for life requires a heart for God. It is no burden to do something for someone you love. Love is evidence of life. Divine life produces divine love. The single constraint to God's commands is love.

Psalm 19:11, "Moreover by them [God's commands] Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward."

Psalm 119:32, "I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart."

When you love, it is not difficult to obey. It is not difficult for people who are in love to obey one another. It is not difficult for a man who loves his wife to obey her. If she says, "Please take out the garbage," he will do it for her. This is not irksome--a little tedious, but not irksome! A burden occurs where there is a lack of love.

We know that God has given to us divine directives in His Word for our own good, for our

own benefit. I grant you, some of the directives we may not fully comprehend. We may not understand why, and we may question some of them but, nevertheless, God obligates us to do them. Later in eternity He might explain to us the full rationale for His principles for life.

Jesus said that Pharisees put religious burdens on people (Matt. 23:4). Jesus offered to lift religious burdens (Matt. 11:29,30). Faith in Him abolishes religious burdens.

Gal. 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [love]."

James 2:8 "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well..."

1 John 5:4

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."

For

"For" explains why God's commandments are not burdensome. There is a victory in the new birth that comes from Jesus Christ. The world system cannot bear God's operating principles, so God's Word is burdensome to them. They cannot tolerate such a scale of values.

whatever

Every Christian without exception--spiritual or carnal, mature or immature--has the faith to gain victory. The principle of victory is universal for each believer, with all that the new nature in its entirety entails.

is born of God overcomes the world.

The emphasis here is not on the believer who overcomes but on the power that God gave him at his spiritual birth. The nature of the new birth inclines the heart of the believer towards God's Word. The new nature counteracts all the force of the world system.

Spiritual success originates in our spiritual birth. The Greek tense indicates that whenever a person becomes born again, he is born again permanently (perfect tense) with a new capacity to live for God.

The idea of "overcomes" is to prevail, to conquer, to win a victory, to overpower. Every child of God has the capacity to conquer the world system (4:4).

The Greek indicates that this victory is a continual overcoming. We must understand the "world" in terms of Satan's value system.

Note that the word "overcomes" occurs in 2:13,14. There we overcame the devil. Christians need victory over the devil and they need victory over the satanic world system. There is power in the initial faith exercised in salvation. There is power derived from our new birth - "born of God."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Principle: Jesus makes His victory the victory of His followers through spiritual birth.

Application: There are some Christians who allow the world to overcome them because they are of the world. God wants us to be in the world but not of the world.

1 John 2:15 "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Christians face very powerful forces against their spiritual life today. The values of this world fly in our face every day through various media. The world pushes its values in many ways: immorality as a lifestyle, doing whatever it takes to get ahead, lying if it suits your purposes. Young adults today, like no other generation, violate biblical norms.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world

Some Christians do not gain victory over the world. The world conquers them. The "world" is all that opposes the will of God and His commandments. The victory gained at the cross overcomes the world.

2 Tim. 4:10 "...for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica - Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia."

- our faith

Faith is the key to love others. We more and more gain victory over the world as our faith grows. The Object and work of our faith is Who and what gives victory over Satan's system. Jesus conquered the world during His earthly ministry (John 16:33) by His sacrificial death for our sins. The tiniest faith grasps the reality of God's eternal order and sees the ultimate failure of the satanic order.

Rom. 8:37 "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

1 Cor. 15:57 "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Principle: We overcome the world system by taking God at His Word.

Application: Faith is simply taking God at His Word. Faith in an adequate object produces a good outcome. We get victory over the entire satanic system by placing faith in the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross. Victory does not come by placing faith in ourselves. The adequate object of our faith is the promises of God.

We overcome the world system by faith. By applying faith in the Word of God to specific problems, we commit to greater standards and values. We focus faith on Jesus Christ and His provisions. When we put God's principles to practice by faith every day, we mature spiritually.

We can tell we walk by faith if we produce fruit (John 15:8), introduce others to Christ and gain victory over the flesh. Faith is trust in God's operating assets. If that does not tie in with experience, experience is wrong. We do not interpret the Bible by human experience. If our experience contradicts the Bible, then there is something wrong with our procedure of perception. We might have experienced a religious hallucination. We have been deluded.

Rather, we interpret our experience by the Bible. In God's system of values, victory always comes through the Lord Jesus.

Gal. 6:14 "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

1 John 5:5

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

Who is he who overcomes the world,

We get our English word "Nike" from the Greek word "overcomes." Nike was the goddess of victory. Each Christian will overcome the world when he enters heaven's gates but the issue here is overcoming the world while we live on earth.

but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

No one can overcome the world system unless he believes in the deity of Christ. The person that believes in the deity of Christ overcomes the world. Victory results from faith in Him. This is not simply a rhetorical question but an appeal to fact.

Gal. 1:4 "...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Everything depends on who and what we believe. Jesus and His work is the content of our trust. The importance of the cross is who died on it.

John 20:31 "...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Principle: Faith in the incarnate Christ brings power to every Christian to overcome the world system.

Application: Faith in the incarnate Christ brings power to overcome sin and the world system. This is not a glib statement but a pronouncement of profound principle. Christians can live lives of victory in the face of powerful, daily pressures from the world system. They march to a different drummer. They have enough conviction to not be swayed by the world system. Spiritual Christians have a different and independent system of evaluation of life.

Rom. 8:37 "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

2 Cor. 2:14 "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."

Rev. 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.... 11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.... 17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.... 26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations –

Rev. 3:5 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.... 12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.... 21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

We overcome the unbelief inherent in the world system totally devoid of true trust in the eternal Son of God in all the fullness of His deity. There is something in our new life in Christ that allows us to respond to God's system of values and reject Satan's system of values. When we own God's values and live our lives in harmony with those values, we overcome the world. If we do not live in harmony with those values, discord comes to our spiritual lives.

True faith does not believe in spite of the facts but it believes in spite of the cost. It acts on what God says as true. This is not the faith of years ago when we first came to Christ only. It is the faith of moment-by-moment trust in God's counter principles for life.

The Word of God has a revelatory function in our spirituality. It shows the power of sin and the power of Christ to counteract sin. Faith in God's

provisions in the Word of God provides the power to overcome sin issues.

1 John 5:6

“This is He who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

Now we come to the combined testimony of three witnesses to Christ the Messiah. All three testimonies point to the same end – that Jesus is the Son of God.

John has been emphasizing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who stepped foot into humanity as Jesus. John stresses the nature of the testimony about the incarnation in verses 6-8 and His deity in 9-12.

The Greek word for “witness” occurs 10 times in verses 6-12, translated by different English words. John employs legal testimony to ratify his argument.

This

“This” refers to the mention of Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the previous verse.

is He who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ;

The purpose of Jesus’ coming was to save sinners.

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

Heb. 10:5 “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me.’”

not only by water,

The “water” here may refer to Jesus’ baptism in water by John the Baptist. However, it may refer to the water that flowed out of His side on the cross (John 19:34). I believe it is best to take “water” as the baptism of Christ because the false teachers of John’s day believed that the Messiah came upon Jesus at His baptism and not at His birth. The emphasis on His blood indicates that Jesus was Messiah not only in His life, but even in His death.

but by water and blood.

The “blood” refers to the shed blood of Christ on the cross. Cerinthus and other false teachers of the first century taught that the Messiah descended on the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him before His crucifixion. John argues here polemically against this heresy.

The only other passage where “water” and “blood” occur together is John 19:34. The “water” in that case was the water that flowed from the side of Christ on the cross. John uses “blood” in this book (1:7) for the sacrificial death of Christ.

Heb. 9:12 “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Principle: Certainty is possible for the Christian because he rests his belief on objective witnesses.

Application: Faith leans on testimony. The validity of the testimony about Christ is at the heart of Christian belief. Man cannot receive testimony by himself. There are no human categories available to him through which he can understand it.

Ben Franklin said in 1789, “Nothing is for certain but death and taxes.” The Bible disagrees with this assertion. The Bible asserts the concept of certainty because it offers categories whereby we can know something for sure.

The spirit of our age is relativism, which asserts that there are no absolutes. People who declare conviction or certainty about something are viewed as odd and rigid by those who say, “We cannot know anything for sure. Who are you to tell me that I am wrong?” This spirit has so pervaded preachers of the church (not necessarily preachers of Christ) that Christians have become people with little or no conviction.

Christianity rests upon truth, a truth beyond ourselves and about Jesus Christ. Finite man cannot come to ultimate truth by his own wits. His opinion is no better than anyone else’s opinion. However, the Christian has two dynamics that afford him certainty: 1) the objective Word of God and 2) the internal witness of the Holy Spirit Himself.

And it is the Spirit who bears witness,

The Holy Spirit is an additional witness to the Messiahship of Christ beyond “water” and “blood.” John uses the word “know” thirty-nine times in 1 John. This is an emphasis of certainty. The verb and the noun for “witness” occur nine times in this immediate section of 1 John.

John 5:31 “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. **32** “There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. **33** “You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. **34** “Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. **35** “He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. **36** “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. **37** “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. **38** “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. **39** “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. **40** “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

John uses the various forms of “witness” 10 times in this passage sometimes translated “testimony” or “testify.” The central ministry of the Holy Spirit is to “glorify” Christ (John 16:13-13). The Holy Spirit is the conclusive witness to truth.

because the Spirit is truth

John steps beyond the apostolic testimony of New Testament writers to the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cannot give testimony to anything but the “truth.” He is the primary revealer of truth and He cannot lie. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible (2 Peter 1:21). He must tell the truth by His very nature.

Principle: The mission of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ who is the truth.

Application: The Holy Spirit bears witness with our human spirit in a number of ways. First, He bears witness that we belong to God and are children of God.

Rom. 8:16 “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Jesus said, “I am the truth” (John 14:6). He is truth itself. The Holy Spirit bears witness to that truth and the Holy Spirit is truth as well as Jesus is the truth. The Holy Spirit delights to communicate who and what the Lord Jesus is all about.

John 14:16 “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – **17** “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

John 16:14 “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. Any ministry that glorifies the Holy Spirit above the Lord Jesus Christ is off target. The Holy Spirit always points to Jesus as the Savior and provider for our souls. If we want to please the Holy Spirit, we must point to Jesus as the center of life.

We glorify Christ when we emphasize what He did for us, not what we do for Him. Emphasizing what we do for Him is self-centeredness. Emphasizing what He did for us is Christ-centeredness.

1 John 5:7

“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”

This verse is not in older Greek manuscripts.

John enlarges on the Holy Spirit’s witness to the truth (5:6) concerning the person and work of Christ. He appeals to three more witnesses.

For there are three that bear witness in heaven:

The Law required that two or three witness to verify a thing (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

1 Tim. 5:19 "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."

the Father,

The Father is the originator and planner of creation. He sent the Word.

the Word,

The Word is the revealer.

and the Holy Spirit;

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of the Father's plan.

and these three are one

The testimonies of the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit all converge to prove the same point, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Principle: The Bible teaches the fact of the trinity.

Application: If this verse belongs to the original Greek manuscripts, it clearly teaches the trinity. However, if this verse is not a genuine text, the doctrine of the trinity does not rest upon this single verse. The trinity does bear witness to the person and work of Christ as deduced from the entire New Testament.

2 Cor. 13:14 "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

1 John 5:8

"And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one."

This verse sets forth three witnesses to the truth: 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) the water baptism of Christ and 3) the substitutionary death of Christ by His shed blood.

And there are three that bear witness on earth:

There are three testimonies to Christ on earth. The "earth" is the sphere where the testimonies bear witness.

the Spirit,

The "Spirit" here is the ministry of the Holy Spirit through His revelation of the Old and New Testaments and convicting work to each

individual. The Holy Spirit personalizes truth to our experience.

The water,

"Water" refers to the baptism of Christ.

And the blood;

The "blood" refers to the sacrificial death of Christ for our sins. Jesus fully and finally paid for our sins. No further suffering for them is necessary.

And these three agree as one

The three witnesses of this verse are in agreement. Two witnesses to Christ are historical and one is personal. All three witnesses present Christ in one harmonious whole. Consensus of the concurring witnesses converges on the one end of the centrality of the person and work of Christ. The Spirit proves this point in verses 9-12.

Principle: The Holy Spirit moves us toward making Jesus Christ an integral part of our life.

Application: The Holy Spirit applies to our heart the reality of Christ and His ministry to us. Jesus' blood frees us from the penalty of sin. He wants us to be more than religious spectators.

Isaiah 53:4, "Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

1 John 5:9

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son."

If we receive the witness of men,

We accept the testimony of men in the normal course of everyday life. We accept at face value what credible witnesses have to say. This is standard practice among men.

the witness of God is greater;

John argues the logic of the lesser to the greater. If we accept man's witness, God is a greater witness. God Himself gives direct testimony that Jesus

Christ is His Son, in verses nine through twelve. Verses 9, 10 and 11 all end with an emphasis on Jesus as the Father's "own Son."

for this is the witness of God which He has testified

The ultimate starting point of testimony about Jesus as the Son of God is from God Himself. The words "has testified" mean that God testified in the past with the result that that testimony stands. God testified about Jesus at His baptism and through His death on the cross (5:6).

of His Son

"Of His Son" is literally concerning His Son. God's focus is the person and work of Christ. God puts His focus on the centrality of Christ (Christocentricity).

Principle: God Himself states that His message is centered in His Son.

Application: Recognition of God's witness about His Son always involves accepting Jesus as the Son of God.

We accept proof from teaches, eyewitnesses in accidents and Delta airlines' commitment to the airworthiness of its planes. This is the common, everyday practice of people. Companies will lose credibility or business if they deceive us, so we generally do not doubt the accuracy of their witness. It is normal to trust what people say. How much greater is God's credibility and witness to Jesus Christ? We could have no greater source to the wonder of the Lord Jesus than the Father.

The most important reason why we should believe in the person and work of Christ is because God the Father is the witness to Him.

Matt. 3:17 "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Matt. 17:5 "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

God expects Christians to testify of the Lord Jesus. He arranged things in such a way that He incorporates us into the plan of worldwide evangelism.

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

1 John 5:10

"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son."

In this verse we come to the experiential witness to the Son of God – the indwelling Holy Spirit in every true believer.

He who believes in

The phrase "he who believes in the Son of God" picks up the idea of belief in verse one. John uses the grammatical construction "believe in" thirty-seven times. This is the first occurrence of the word "believe" combined with "in" in 1 John. The idea is that faith rests in an object. Faith fully relies upon the person of the Son of God.

the Son of God

The Son of God is the great object of 1 John.

has the witness in himself;

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the internal witness to the heart of the true believer. Every truly born again believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit in him. The internal witness of the Spirit gives the Christian assurance that he was right in believing in Jesus as the Son of God.

Faith brings to the believer a consciousness of the dynamic indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inwardly witnesses to the truth of salvation. Christians receive a conscious assurance of their salvation due to Him.

Principle: We can not only be sure what we believe but that we believe.

Application: Assurance does not rest on our emotions but on an inner witness from the Holy Spirit. Trust in the Son of God makes possible the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to our salvation.

Rom. 8:16 "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer

with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Gal. 4:6 “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

Some Christians do not know that they have the indwelling Holy Spirit in them. They know that they believe in Jesus but they do not know about the residing Holy Spirit. Each person who believes in Jesus has the Holy Spirit in him. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in each Christian at the point of salvation and stays there until he goes to be with the Lord (Ep 4:30).

The Christian is a shrine or sacred place because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. How we feel about this is irrelevant. It does not make any difference whether or not you know, understand, or believe it. The issue is whether the Holy Spirit confirms our faith in the Son of God. Faith takes God at His Word.

When a believer comes to the place where he knows that he has received the Holy Spirit, as well as the Lord Jesus, it is then that he permits the Holy Spirit to do something in him and for him. He recognizes the Holy Spirit’s presence. He ignored the Holy Spirit before but now he knows he is a Christian.

he who does not believe God

This phrase introduces the alternative to the faith of the previous phrase. John writes against the Gnostics. Gnostics believed that Jesus was an ordinary human at His birth but became the Messiah at His baptism. According to them, Jesus received deity from His baptism until just before the cross when the Spirit left Him.

has made Him a liar,

Anyone who does not believe what God says in the Word makes God a liar. In verses 9-12, God gives testimony to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Anyone who rejects Jesus as the Son makes God a liar. He brands God a liar. It is one thing to call God a liar but it is another thing to “make” Him a liar.

1 John 1:11, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Principle: Assurance of salvation rests on God’s promise of salvation confirmed in His Word.

Application: Making God a liar is worse than calling God a liar. If you call a person a liar, you get into trouble, but there is no way for you to make a person a liar. The person who does not believe God brands God a liar, “because he believeth not the record, that God gave of His Son.”

The Bible is God’s record. We must believe the record that God gave concerning Jesus in order to go to heaven. That is the essential, irreducible minimum to be right with God.

Are you greatly exercised about the assurance of your salvation? We do not gain assurance of salvation by feeling, but by trust in God’s record of how we become Christians. It is an issue of believing the trustworthiness of God’s Word. Note the next verse:

1 John 5:11, “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

because he has not believed

“Believed the testimony” expresses personal trust and reliance on the Son and His ministry on our behalf. This is more than believing the fact that He is the Son; it is relying on or resting in what God said about His Son. We honor God when we trust Him. God puts belief and unbelief in stark contrast.

John combines the two words “believe” and “in” for the second time in this verse. Christians put their trust or reliance in the Father’s “testimony” about the Son. Disbelief assaults the character of the person disbelieved. This is not simply believing a person but believing in a person.

the testimony

God gave His testimony in verses 8 and 9. The purpose of God’s testimony is to offer faith in His Son (John 1:7; 20:31). “Testimony” is the cause of trust in the Son.

Failure to believe in Jesus, the Son of God, is a two-fold failure: 1) failure to trust in Christ for

salvation and 2) failure to believe in God as a credible witness. Unbelief makes God out to be a liar. The person who believes God credits His witness.

Note the change of parallelism here. It is not trust in Christ or even God but rather simply believing what God has to say. We must believe what God says about Christ before we can believe in the Son of God Himself. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We cannot separate the Son and the witness about the Son.

Principle: We credit God's witness to truth when we believe.

Application: We do not determine whether we are Christians by how we feel. We will never gain assurance of salvation by emotions. We gain assurance by accepting God's Word as true. It is the objective Word of God and not our subjective experience that gives us assurance of salvation.

Rom. 10:17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

that God has given of His Son

We cannot excuse rejection of Jesus as the Son of God on the basis of ignorance because God made Himself abundantly clear on that subject. Unbelief in Jesus as the Son of God is culpable because it rejects God's testimony.

It is not possible to confuse the nature of God's witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. God makes the witness possible. He asserts the validity of the Son.

Principle: We affirm God's credibility by believing His testimony about Jesus Christ.

Application: Belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the irreducible minimum in becoming a Christian. By accepting God's testimony to the truth in Jesus, we affirm the credibility of the One who gave the testimony. Lack of trust in God's Word constitutes Him a liar.

We may think we honor God when we say, "Well, I would like to believe, but somehow I don't feel sure that I am a Christian. If only I could have a different feeling come over me, then I would know that I am a Christian." But so long as we talk like that we make God a liar. God has told us something in His Word that He expects us to believe.

What does it imply if we do not believe Him? This unbelief deals with more than the testimony; it looks beyond the testimony to the subject of the testimony. Our disbelief is a failure to trust Him. There is a wide difference between believing a man and believing in a man. If we believe a man, we do no more than accept the fact that whatever statement he may be making at the moment is true. All that we are saying is that in a particular case we believe that he is telling the truth.

However, if we believe in a man, we accept the whole man and all that he stands for in complete confidence and trust. We are not only prepared to trust his spoken word but also to trust our lives to him. Believing in the Father's testimony is not simply accepting what He says is true; it is a commitment to all that He says is true; it is to place ourselves in His hands for time and eternity.

When we put ourselves into God's hands, the Holy Spirit within us testifies that we believe aright. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the conviction of the ultimate worth and value of Jesus Christ. This trust assures us that we are right to make this act of commitment to Him. The man who refuses to do that is refusing the promptings of the Holy Spirit within his heart. He refuses to listen to God's message.

1 John 5:11

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

Verses 11 and 12 are the climax to 1 John. The Son of God is the "Word of Life". Possession of the Son of God is possession of eternal life and vice versa.

And this is the testimony:

John now gives the content of God's testimony in this verse. We cannot separate eternal life from the person of Christ. False teachers tried to split the two in 2:25-26. It is not the truth of eternal life at issue here but rather only those who know God's Son possess it. False teachers do not enjoy eternal life.

1 John 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, concerning the Word of life – 2 the life was

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

that God has given us eternal life,

The result of God’s witness about Jesus Christ is that God gives the believer in Jesus Christ eternal life. The words “eternal life” are emphatic. The testimony is that God gave eternal life when He gave His Son. Eternal life is the final testimony to God’s Son. Eternal life is more than a quantity of life that lasts forever; it is a quality of life, the highest spiritual life irrespective of time (John 17:2-3; 3:15,16; 5:24-26; 6:40,47,68; 10:10,28; 11:25-26). This life is the very life of God Himself.

Principle: Eternal life is as much qualitative life as much as quantitative life.

Application: Eternal life is qualitative life because God is absolutely free from corruption. He is pure holiness. God is peace so the eternal life He passes to us has symmetry. Eternal life contains unconditional love so we have capacity for unconditional love. God embodies eternal life in the person of the Son of God. The person who embraces Jesus Christ as his or her Savior begins a new kind of life. He or she will experience that life forever.

John 11:25 “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

and this life is in His Son

The Son is the means to eternal life. We can find eternal life nowhere else than in God’s beloved Son. There is no compromise here. This is because God’s Son is life (1:2; John 11:25; 14:6). Eternal life testifies to the Son’s life with the Father, a qualitative and eternal life. The possession of eternal life is a testimony to God’s Son. This is because eternal life fundamentally rests in Jesus Christ (John 1:4; 11:25; 14:6).

Note the sequence of John’s argument. The Father possesses eternal life and gave it to the humanity of Christ (John 5:26). So Jesus can say, “I live because of the Father” (John 6:57). In turn, Jesus

gives believers eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; 20:31). This is evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

John 1:4 “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

John 5:26 “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

John 6:57 “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.”

Acts 3:14 “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 “and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”

Principle: Eternal life comes exclusively through Jesus Christ

Application: The life of the Son of God both brings us into God’s presence in the eternal state and is a present possession. Jesus is the only way into God’s life and presence.

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

1 John 5:12

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

The plain purpose of verse 12 is to make patent that eternal life comes from the Son of God. Christianity is more than acceptance of a proposition; it is the possession of Person of the Son. The individual united to the Son is united to eternal life. He who rejects the Son rejects eternal life itself.

He who has the Son has life;

This is a logical inference that if a person has the Son of God he has eternal life because it is impossible to have one without the other.

We see the Christian’s vital relationship with the Son by the word “has”. “Has” carries the idea of possession. The Christian currently has possession of eternal life in this life. The present tense in the Greek indicates that Christians continually possess eternal life.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The flip side is negative – a person who does not "have the Son of God does not have life". John directs this statement against the Gnostics who rejected Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Gnostics do not have and hold eternal life.

Principle: Eternal life comes exclusively from the Son of God at the moment of salvation.

Application: Eternal life does not come from our merit; it is an unmerited gift. We find that gift solely in Jesus Christ. Eternal life comes exclusively through Him. The Christian receives eternal life as a present possession at the moment of salvation. We receive eternal life at the moment we receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

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

1 John 5:13

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

John now summarizes his overall purpose for writing in 5:13-21. This is the conclusion and epilog to the epistle. He wants to assure believers of their possession of eternal life.

These things

"These things" refer the entire epistle of 1 John. John wants to review the primary purpose of the epistle. The primary purpose of the letter brings confidence of faith.

I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,

Assurance of salvation rests on God's promise and testimony. It relies on God's Word, not our works.

John looks at his writing of 1 John from the viewpoint of his readers. Genuine Christians come to faith by believing.

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..."

John 6:35 "And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"

John 6:47 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."

John 8:24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"

Principle: Belief is the basis for salvation, not our merit.

Application: Eternal life is a quality and quantity of life that we cannot earn, deserve or buy. We cannot go to some spiritual supermarket and purchase salvation. If we could purchase it, we could never afford it. The only way we can get eternal life is to have it conferred on us freely. God gives it free of charge.

Rom. 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Believe" means simply to receive God's promise or accept it. Extend your spiritual hand out to God and receive it. No gift can be yours until you reach out and receive it. We insult God if we offer Him religion or morality in payment for salvation.

Acts 13:38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 16:30 "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Rom. 4:5 "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness..."

Gal. 3:22 "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

that you may know that you have eternal life,

The purpose of 1 John is to prod us from doubt to certainty. God wants us to "know" that we "have eternal life", not assume or feel that we have it. "Know" means to know with God imparted innate knowledge. This is a settled knowledge that gives peace to the mind and heart.

Eternal life is a lifetime of fellowship with God both in time and in the eternal state. Eternal life is the same kind of life that God possesses. God is willing to share His life with us.

and that you may continue to believe

The present tense of "believe" suggests characterized by belief. This is set in contrast to the non-Christian who does not possess ongoing trust in Christ. Non-believers do not have and hold eternal life.

in the name of the Son of God

The word "in" involves motion towards and repose upon. We repose on the "name of the Son of God." "Name" stands for the person. We rest in a person for salvation. We trust in the unique person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ as God.

The name "Son of God" refers to the unique deity of Jesus Christ that makes eternal life possible.

Principle: Confidence comes from trust in God's Word and promises.

Application: Assurance of eternal life is not presumption for presumption doubts God's promises. God makes it plain that we may know that we have eternal life, not that you might have it some day. Physical life is not eternal life because we can lose it. But eternal life is not like physical life in that we cannot lose it. Eternal life is forever.

Our feelings have nothing to do with whether we are truly born again; it is a matter of accepting

God's Word at face value. It is who says it that counts. It makes a great difference who says what. If we receive a letter from a friend, we accept what they say at face value because it comes from a friend. We have no reason to suspect that they would deceive us.

On the other hand, we may receive a business letter from a company with whom we do business. We may wonder whether their proposal is on the level. They may over state the case in order to get our business; it may be exaggerated or a downright lie, business being what it is in some circles. However, if we receive a communication from the Prime Minister of Canada you would accept at face value what he said because of who he is.

John 20:30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

2 Tim. 1:12 "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

Tit 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

If we do not have assurance of salvation, we will not have the joy of our salvation. How can you share eternal life with others if you are not sure whether you have it yourself? How can you lead your children to Christ if you waffle about it yourself?

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

1 John 5:14

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

Prayer is a demonstration of the Christian's confidence in God (3:21).

Now this is the confidence

Christians can pray confidently because they know God hears and answers prayer. This brings conviction to their prayers.

The origin of the word "confidence" is in the idea of freedom of speech (2:28). Christians have the privilege of talking freely and confidently to God about their needs.

John addresses the subject of "confidence" at three previous points in this epistle:

- 1) Confidence of freedom from shame at the rapture, 2:28,
- 2) Confidence of a clear conscience in prayer, 3:21-22, and
- 3) Confidence at the judgment seat of Christ because our love resembles God's love, 4:17.

Principle: God is accessible to the believer.

Application:

Christians can have confidence in approaching the Father in prayer. Confidence in prayer is for those who are born again yet many experience frustration in prayer. They can trust God for eternal life but they cannot trust Him for this life. We trust God for a life without end but we do not trust Him to meet our financial needs.

We have a general faith in God but very little confidence in Him. We know that we place confidence in God if we have an effective prayer life.

Matt. 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Eph 3:20 "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

that we have in Him,

"In Him" is literally towards Him. This connotes active fellowship with God. We develop confidence in prayer when we are in fellowship with Him.

Principle: We have confidence in prayer when we walk with the Lord.

Application: Our right of asking God for petitions and intercessions is unconditional. Our right rests on the person and work of Christ. That is why we come in Jesus' name.

John 14:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

God was accessible to Elijah in his confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kg 18). The Baal prophets cut themselves so that their god would listen to them but it did no good. Their god was inaccessible. Their prayers were futile. God heard and answered the prayer of Elijah.

The Christian today has access to the God of the universe because Jesus broke the barrier between God and the Christian. The Christian has uninhibited boldness in prayer because of the work of Jesus Christ.

Heb. 4:14" Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

that if we ask anything

"If we ask" presumes expectation. Since the Christian is certain that he possesses eternal life (5:13), he can be confident that God answers prayer.

Principle: We must know the will of God to have confidence in prayer.

Application: Unanswered prayer is an enigma to many today. They experiment around the edges of prayer but never get serious with it. They do not pray with certainty. Sometimes they use prayer as the "last resort".

Most mystery about prayer revolves around nature of prayer. Some launch attempts at prayer but give up because of their perceptions about what prayers is all about. Then they lose confidence in prayer altogether because God did not answer their prayer. They assume that prayer fails to meet their needs.

Some Christians use prayer as a genie that persuades God to do what they want. If they rub the genie the right way, they get what they want. This is a parody of prayer. By this they make outlandish demands on God that they believe is their right. God promises to meet our needs, not our "greed". This is praying "according to our lusts,"

James 4:3 "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Genuine prayer prays in God's will and according to God's nature. Prayer outside God's will is an insult to His integrity. There is a wide range wherein we can pray. We pray for what God requires, not what we desire.

The act of prayer is simple but the characteristics of prayer are not simple. We can have confidence in prayer because God delights for Christians to take Him at His word. He loves bold faith and bold prayer (He 4:14-16; He 10:19).

Prayer is not an endeavor to move God to see things our way. It is not an attempt to change God's values or standards. God is not willing to give His child something that is not good for him. God wants to give what is in the best interest of the child of God. God does not pander to self-gratification.

Phil. 4:19" And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Our prayers must align themselves with the will of God and be consistent with the character and plan of God for the universe. Jesus said, "Not my will but Yours be done".

Prayer is more than submitting wishes to God. We can have confidence that God will answer our prayers if we ask in His will by faith. The more we grasp God's will the more effective our prayer life will be.

according to His will,

God always answers prayer that is asked "according to His will." God reveals His will in the Word of God. God answers prayer according to the dynamics of our prayer life. The better we know God's will, the more He will answer our prayers.

Principle: The better we know God's will the better our prayer life will be.

Application: God does not answer any whim of any prayer. If we pray with confidence we must pray according to His will. How do we know His will? His will is in His Word. That is why we have so few prayers answered. These are the plain, bare, brutal facts. Many Christians do not have any answers to prayer so they don't bother to pray much any more. They just trust to luck. They luck it out when it comes to the path of their lives.

God answers prayer according to certain standards. For example, we must ask in Jesus name (John 14:13; 15:16) and be in fellowship (John 15:7; 1 John 3:22) for God to answer prayer. Another condition is to have confidence that God hears and responds to prayer.

Prayer is submission to the will of God. We yield ourselves to God's will in responding to our prayer. We want our prayer to correspond to God's will. If we ask in God's will, God will most assuredly answer our prayer. We discern the will of God through the Word of God.

There are three types of God's will:

1. God's direct and unchanging will
2. God's permissive will conditioned on certain factors
3. God's overruling will

God does not give a blank check in prayer. He qualifies prayer with His will. If what we pray is not in His will, God will not answer our prayer because we are not on His wavelength. Our prayer was out of the will of God. We prayed according to our will, not God's will.

He hears us

God answers prayer. God hears our prayers because He is omniscient but He also hears our prayers because He wants to respond to His children. Hearing our prayers here is synonymous with answering prayers.

Principle: God conditions answered prayer on our ask.

Application: All God has to do is hear our prayer and He will answer it. If He does not hear it He will not answer it! You may say, "He hears all

prayers". Oh no, there are many prayers God never hears.

Psalm 66:8 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear."

1 Peter 3:7 "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

There are basic spiritual laws in reference to prayer just like there are basic laws of physics. If God does not hear me, He will not answer me. If we are out of the will of God, we cannot get God's attention. If we are in God's will, we get His attention.

Psalm 65:2, "O You who hear prayer, To You all flesh will come."

1 John 5:15

"And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

And

The word "and" shows that John continues to discuss the certainty of answered prayer from verse 14. If we know God's will and pray according to it, we know that God will answer our prayer.

if we know that He hears us,

God "hears" all prayers because He is all-knowing but He only hears those prayers sympathetically under certain conditions.

Note the repetition of the word "know" in this verse. This is a word of assurance. Corresponding confidence of assured answer to prayer follows upon the conviction of having been heard. We "know" that God hears us as a result of Spirit-imparted information.

whatever we ask,

John conditioned "whatever" with "according to His will" in the previous verse. We know that God will answer "whatever" we ask in God's will.

Principle: When a child of God believes God's promises in prayer, God moves His hand for that believer.

Application: God has certain ground rules for answered prayer. Here are a number of qualifications to answered prayer:

1. Praying in Jesus name (prayer that is consistent with His person and work and based on that authority), John 14:13-14; 16:23-24
2. Abiding in fellowship (the Spirit-filled life), John 15:7; Ps 66:18; James 4:3
3. Ask in faith, James 1:5-8; Je 33:33
4. Ask according to God's will, 1 John 5:14

God never violates Himself to answer our prayers. He will not contradict His holiness to answer prayer. As a parent will not give a sharp knife to a small child so God will not give certain things to His children. He loves us too much to do that. God will not give us things that will hurt us.

Matt. 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

On the other hand, God does give us things we ask according to His will. As you give your children more than oatmeal and underwear, God wants to give you more than you imagine. If we would capitalize on this privilege of prayer, He will do amazing things for us.

Prov. 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight."

Prov. 15:29 "The Lord is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous."

Luke 11:1 "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Luke 18:1 "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart..."

Acts 6:4 "...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 12:5 "Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church."

Rom. 12:12 "...continuing steadfastly in prayer..."

Eph. 6:18 "...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful

to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."

1 Thess. 5:17 "...pray without ceasing..."

1 Peter 4:7 "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers..."

Accept God's challenge to pray.

1 John 5:16

"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."

John continues his discussion on prayer in this verse but he extends the issue to praying for those in spiritual need.

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin

The object of prayer in this verse is a believer out of fellowship. The word "brother" clearly indicates that the person in need is a Christian (2:9-11; 3:14-15; 5:1). The words "a sin" indicate that the issue at hand is a specific sin or an identifiable sin.

The person who prays about this situation must "see" the sin for himself. He does not buy into religious gossip or slander.

Principle: We must operate on objectivity when correcting fallen Christians.

Application: Spiritual Christians do not operate on religious gossip or slander. They look at things objectively and dispassionately. The issue here is not rumor or gossip via the grapevine but objective knowledge about the fact of a Christian's sin. Secondhand information might be false. The normal reaction is to react subjectively to some sin in a believer. The spiritual believer does not pick up the phone and tell everyone he knows about it.

which does not lead to death,

The idea of "death" here is not spiritual death but physical death. Some Christians die prematurely because of protracted unconfessed sin (1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30).

Principle: Some Christians die physically before their time.

Application: Christians begin eternal life at the point of salvation and can never lose that salvation at any future point.

John 10:28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

John 17:11 "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

However, Christians can lose the experience of abundant living. They can blunt the *modus vivendi* of their spirituality.

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Christians also have the possibility of committing a sin to the point of corporal death. God sometimes signs the death warrant of Christians in intransigent sin. There are a number of occasions of the "sin unto death" in the Word of God. Ananias and Sapphira are cases in point (Acts 5:1-11). God sentenced them to death for misrepresentation of the facts. Paul assigned a Christian living in incest to death should he not repent (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Moses committed the sin unto death by striking the rock (Nu 20:8, 12). Achan committed the sin unto death by hiding condemned garments in the book of Joshua. He and his family were put to death for this.

We should not confuse the "sin unto death" with the unpardonable sin. Only unbelievers can commit the unpardonable sin and only unbelievers of Jesus' day at that. These are two different situations altogether. The unpardonable sin was the sin of attributing the work of Christ to the work of Satan.

Many Christians do not die in bed. God does not allow them to live out their full amount of years. God jerks them up short and takes them home to be with Him. He takes them home with a dishonorable discharge. That is a miserable way to

go home to meet God. God saves their soul so as by fire. He saves some people by the skin of their teeth.

1 Cor. 3:15 "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

he will ask,

Asking here is intercessory prayer for a backslidden believer (5:14,15). Spiritual Christians are not indifferent to the spiritual needs of carnal Christians. Intercessory prayer does not concern itself simply with personal problems or needs but with the needs of others.

and He will give him life

The spiritual Christian who asks God to intervene for the carnal Christian may save his spiritual life. "Life" here is fellowship with the Lord. Sin separates us from fellowship. Christians can effectually pray for the spiritual condition of believers out of fellowship.

This is a case in which prayer is effectual. Any sin not involving the sin unto death is amenable to God answering prayer. It is difficult to distinguish between those who commit sin unto physical death and those who do not. The spiritual life of the person who does not commit the sin punished by death is salvable.

for those who commit sin not leading to death.

By changing to the plural "those," John expands the issue to include any Christian that is out of fellowship.

Principle: It is permissible to pray for any carnal Christian who has not committed the sin unto death.

Application: God offers no stay of execution to believers under the sin unto physical death. They are under a death warrant.

We cannot do anything for carnal Christians until we first pray for them. Christians who love fellow Christians care when they fall. Love cannot be indifferent to spiritual need, so spiritual Christians offer prayer on behalf of the carnal Christian. Christians are to pray for others rather than for "Us four and no more."

Eph. 6:18 "...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful

to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — ..."

James 5:16 "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Everything we do and say reflects on God's character. Our behavior reflects on His reputation. It is impossible to fellowship with God if we have unconfessed sin in our lives. That is why God introduces divine discipline into our lives.

God is in the business of disciplining His children (He 12:5-6,10-11). The purpose of all discipline is to bring the believer back into fellowship. God never punishes the believer for punishment's sake. Sometimes God brings believers to the point of physical death because they will not deal with the sin that is in their lives. Living with unconfessed sin invites divine discipline.

1 Cor. 11:29 "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [die]. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened [divine discipline on the Christian] by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."

God's answer to prayer is always in His perfect timing. It is never too soon or too late. Once we make our requisition and submit it to the sovereignty of God, God puts it into His schedule for answering. This is especially true in divine discipline.

There is sin leading to death.

There is a sin where prayer is not effectual. This is an exception to the general rule that God answers all prayers prayed in His will. It is useless to make a request about a person committing the sin unto death because he is under God's sentence of death.

The reference here is not to the sin that leads to spiritual death – that is, eternal separation from God. All sin ultimately leads to death (Ro 6:23), but that is not the meaning here. The idea here is that a Christian can die a premature physical

death because of prolonged and intransigent carnality.

I do not say that he should pray about that

The word "pray" is a different Greek word than the word "ask" earlier in the verse. The idea of "pray" is request, inquire. John does not encourage his readers to inquire about the healing of an intransigent Christian because the carnal Christian is volitionally shut down to God. That is a matter between the carnal Christian and God. God has His way of dealing with the obstinate.

Principle: Christians living in protracted sin can reach a point of being under a sentence of physical death.

Application: Most sins that Christians commit do not result in immediate physical death or a sentence of physical death. That is why we can pray for them.

Heb. 13:18 "Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably."

James 5:14 "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Prayer will not prevent the "sin unto death." There is no sense in praying for someone who is implacably and incorrigibly obtuse. Some Christians enter into such a state of carnality that they head for divine discipline that takes on the nature of physical death (5:19-20; Pr. 10:27; 11:19; 13:14; 19:16). Prayer for the carnal Christian is not the same thing as prayer for the Christian under God's death sentence.

1 Tim. 5:24 "Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. 25 Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden."

1 John 5:17

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

All unrighteousness is sin,

Hebrews warns against committing a sin that has no possibility of repentance (He 6:6, 26-27). The sin in Hebrews was the return to using Old Testament sacrifices after full realization that the sacrifice had come – Jesus' death on the cross. There is no possibility of repentance as long as one operates on Old Testament sacrifices because that prefers the type to the antitype. Christians can commit a sin leading to premature physical death. Prayer will not change this fact (5:16).

John does not want to be misunderstood by his statement in the previous verse that there is no need to pray for the Christian who commits the sin unto death. He does not want to minimize the seriousness of violating a holy God or to discourage Christians from praying for all carnal Christians.

Sin violates God's objective and absolute standards for life. "Unrighteousness" is the underlying principle for the commission of sin. Unrighteousness is injustice – it is the desire to break out of God's will, authority and objective standards for right.

Any "unrighteousness" or lawlessness against the authority of God's standards for life is sin. There is no exception to this – "all."

"All unrighteousness" is an occasion for intercessory prayer except for the sin unto death (5:16).

and there is sin not leading to death

On the other hand, there is a sin "not leading to death." Intercessory prayer will change this situation, but not the sin unto death of the previous verse. Spiritual Christians should definitely pray for carnal Christians having not committed the sin leading to death. Intercessory prayer is important to deliver the carnal Christian from divine discipline. Unconfessed sin always invites discipline.

Principle: There is a limit to God's tolerance of sin in our lives.

Application: Most sin does not lead to corporal death, therefore, we can pray for most carnal Christians who do not commit the sin unto death (5:16). It is obvious that God makes distinctions in types of sin among His people. There is a classification of sin that leads to physical death and then there is a class of sin that does not lead to corporal death. For example, Christian teachers have greater responsibility than non-teachers regarding sin.

James 3:1 "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

God is long-suffering and merciful but there is a limit to His tolerance. God takes responsibility for who and what we are. He will not let His people get away with what non-Christians practice. He gives us so much rope and then, like a dog, we reach the end of our rope and jerk up short. God loves us too much to let us get away with bloody murder. He will not let us play fast and loose with the world too long.

1 John 5:18

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."

Now we come to the epilogue of the epistle (5:18-21). John here summarizes the leading thoughts of 1 John.

We know

John concludes the epistle with three clear and candid certainties, each introduced by the word "know." There is no hesitation here, but rather dogmatic affirmations beyond dispute. He fixes the truth with these facts.

- Christians "know" that their divine capacity cannot sin because it originates from God's nature (2:1,14,20; 3:6,9; 4:13; 5:4)

- Christians "know" that their origin is from God (2:29; 3:9; 5:4,5)

- Christians "know" with assurance that they have eternal life coming from their new birth (2:3,27; 3:2,24; 4:7,12,15,16)

There is no speculation here. "Know" has to do with intuitive knowledge, knowledge divinely

imparted. We know not because we academically learned it; we know by inner assurance.

that whoever

"Whoever" indicates that the subject is more than spiritual Christians, mature Christians, veteran Christians; anyone with a divine nature does "not sin." All true believers are in view here. There is no exception to the sinlessness of the new nature.

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

Principle: Once it was nature to sin but now it is unnatural.

Application: God divinely imparts intuitive assurance to Christians that they have a status quo and capacity to gain victory over sin and the devil. The believer has the power from his new life in Christ to gain victory over sin (2:1, 14, 20; 3:6, 9; 4:13; 5:4). This power comes from his new birth. We appropriate this power by addressing the sin issue in our lives (2:29; 3:9; 5:4,5).

1 John 5:1 "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him."

It is crucial that we understand our status quo in the battle against sin. We must remember who we are. We have God's sinless nature dwelling in us. That nature cannot sin. We have another nature that can sin. The new nature or divine nature protects us against the power of the devil. We have all the capital we need to conquer sin. The non-Christian does not have these resources.

is born of God

John again picks up the idea of the family of God (3:9). Father and son carry similar characteristics. Since Christians possess the same nature as God, they manifest His distinctive viewpoint on life.

does not sin;

The phrase "does not sin" carries the idea of abiding results. The believer born of God at one point in the past remains a child of God with permanent sinless constitutional orientation (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4). The new nature is inherently sinless so it cannot sin under any condition.

By being “born of God,” Christians have a new nature or capacity that does not sin [just as in 3:9]. The sin capacity can sin and the divine capacity cannot sin. A sinful life is not compatible with the “new man” or the divine capacity to relate to God. Divine life received from God at salvation is sinless; it does not have the capacity to sin. God rules this new life in Christ.

Anyone that comes from God cannot sin because God is absolute. The divine dimension of the Christian’s life cannot sin. His sin nature/capacity will sin, but not his divine nature/capacity. If there is no inkling inside a person to please God, he is not a Christian.

1 John 2:18 “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”

Principle: The divine life received from God at salvation is sinless and sets a radically new orientation toward life in the believer.

Application: Conversion is a result of the new nature indwelling the Christian. That is why accepting Christ is so revolutionary. God puts into the believer a dynamic new bearing and attitude of life.

The new nature/capacity of the believer makes a powerful claim on us. It makes compelling demands on the direction of his life. There is no way that we can become a Christian and not significantly change our way of life.

Every truly born again person has the capacity to meet temptation and the wiles of the Devil. His new life in Christ makes him abhor sin. This does not imply that he will be sinless but that the new divine capacity within him cannot sin and moves him to resist sin.

Ability to resist sin lies within every Christian. We do not master sin personally but we have the nature of the Master over sin dwelling within us. By imparting His nature to us, we have a whole new capacity for life. That capacity cannot sin because it is absolute as an entity from God

Himself. God cannot sin and anything that He gives is perfect.

The Christian sins by his old nature or his sin capacity. It is not necessary for the believer to follow the dictates of his sin nature. The only way a Christian can sin is to allow the old nature to have dominance over the new nature.

but he who has been born of God keeps himself,

We could translate this phrase like this: “The one [the believer] fathered by God, He [God] protects him [the believer].” This is why the “wicked one” does not touch him – he has a new capacity or nature protected by God. He has the presence of God’s eternal life living in him.

The word “keeps” suggests keeping guard. God sets the new nature in the believer as an eternal guard over his soul. This new nature is a constant monitor over our attitudes, words and behavior patterns.

Principle: God has the responsibility of keeping us saved.

Application: It is misery not to know for sure that you are a Christian. Christians like this live in despair. They never know whether they are in or out, saved or lost. They do not have the confidence that they will make it to heaven.

Some believe that they can turn salvation on and off: “I accepted Christ five years ago but now I am lost.” That is like saying, “I was a human being but now I am a mule!” A human is a human and not anything else. A Christian is a Christian and he or she can never be anything else. There is no way to become unborn as a human being. There is no way to become unborn believers because the Lord is the Savior of our souls, not us. He does it.

John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one [neuter – “no thing”] is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”

Note the neuter – “Nothing” can pluck us out of the Father’s hand. We cannot do it, others cannot do it, Satan cannot do it, nothing can do it. Some people are out because they were never in.

Rom. 5:10 "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life [the Son is still saving us by interceding for us]."

Rom. 8:38 "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Heb. 7:25 "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost [through any and all sin] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

Heb. 10:14 "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

2 Tim. 1:12 "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

2 Tim. 4:18 "And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!"

Jude 1 "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ..."

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Jude 24 "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, 25 "To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen."

and the wicked one

The word "wicked" means the malice one. Satan is out to hurt Christians if he can. He is very active in his opposition to believers. He is not content to relax but he is pernicious in his attempt to corrupt Christians. With all his attempts to undermine the Christian life, he cannot corrupt the new nature in Christ.

does not touch him

The New Testament uses the word "touch" in two places, here and in John 20:17. The idea is to lay hold of or snatch up. Satan cannot snatch us out of God's hand. Satan cannot "touch" believers because they do not belong to him. Christians are in God's family and belong to Him. Satan cannot assault that relationship because the new life in Christ is impervious to sin (Ep 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Principle: God assures us that we have capacity to have victory over sin and the Devil.

Application: Satan does not have absolute sovereignty over us. God limits the sphere of his influence on us because we are His children. God allows him to tempt or induce us to sin but He does not give the devil absolute right over our souls (2:13).

Job 1:10 "[Satan speaking to God about Job] **Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.**"

God puts a hedge about the believer so that nothing can touch him unless God concurs with it. The devil protested against this hedge (Job 2:5). Although we live in an evil world and are subject to the influence of Satan, we are not alone in the world.

Rom. 16:20 "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Some people say, "The devil made me do it." Satan may tempt us but he cannot make us sin. The devil cannot recapture the true believer. The devil might intimidate us to do this but it is only a hollow threat. He can make us question our salvation but he cannot take it from us. He can derail our fellowship with the Lord but not our

relationship with the Lord. He cannot make us sin but he can set the context for inducement to sin.

We do not have to keep ourselves saved. A Christian can no more keep himself saved than he could save himself. It is Jesus that safeguards us. He provides and protects. The One who saves us in the first place keeps us in the second place.

The Christian cannot serve the Lord with confidence until he or she believes in eternal security. Otherwise, everything he does, he does with the idea of keeping himself saved. His priority is to stack up brownie points with God. This results in the energy of the flesh.

1 John 5:19

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”

We know

This is the third and last “we know” of this section. We know two truths in this verse: 1) we know that God is our Father and 2) that the world system is under the dominion of Satan. One is positive and the other negative. We are either a child of God or a child of the devil, one or the other.

2 Peter 1:2 “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

that we are of God,

We enjoy certainty of our relationship to the Father. In this verse, John shows the distinction between those who find their origin in God and those who find their origin in Satan. The divine capacity/nature is inherently sinless while the sin nature lies under the sway of Satan.

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

1 John 5:1 “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.”

1 John 5:4 “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”

Principle: Life is correspondent with its source.

Application: When a Christian sins, he steps out of character of his spiritual heritage. The partition between the believer and Satan’s world system is as great as separation between God and Satan. The essential division from the satanic system occurred at the point of salvation so Christians have an entirely new way of living. Previously we walked according to the norms and standards of this world. Apart from God there is no satisfaction. When the Christian sins, he is fully aware that he is acting out of character.

The cross is an offense to this world system (Ga 5:11). People living under this system do not want any authority over them and especially they do not care for God’s authority over them. They do not like to be told that to lie and undermine your fellow man is not right. They desire that privilege if it is convenient to their plans. They will deceive anyone to accomplish their purposes. All of this occurs because Satan deludes them. He blinds their eyes and minds.

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

2 Cor. 4:3 “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age [Satan] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one

The corollary to Christians finding their origin in God is that the world finds its origin in the world system. This world in its entirety is under the sway of Satan. It lies helplessly recumbent with no

possibility of resistance. It passively resigns itself to the pernicious power of the "wicked one."

The Christian is under the sway of a new nature. That sets him off from the rebellion of the satanic system.

Principle: The entire constitution of the world system serves Satan.

Application: The satanic system orients to different values than that of God. Satan fiercely defends this system. He pulls the strings here. It is a system entirely dominated by the devil.

Only by regeneration [new birth] can anyone get out of the vicious cycle of lust, greed, drugs, pornography, immorality, betrayal and empty religion. The world loves to pour people into its mold.

John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."

John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."

John 16:11 "...of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

Eph. 2:1 "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

We can determine whether we are spiritual or carnal by asking ourselves which nature has the dominance in our lives: "Does the new man or the old man have control of my life? Who is running the show?" That determines what kind of Christian we are, spiritual or carnal. The carnal Christian and the spiritual Christian both have the same amount of salvation - eternal salvation. The big difference is what kind of reward we will have when we get to heaven. The issue is not whether we will get in, but what will be our reward.

God always gives the Christian latitude when he sins. The degree of latitude differs according to the light received - the more light, the less

latitude. The Spirit of God convicts him and disciplines him so that he gets back on track.

1 John 5:20

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

And we know that the Son of God has come

This is the third and last certainty expressed by the word "know" in this section (5:18-21).

Christians know with certainty that the Son of God came in incarnation. This penetrates the point of difference with the false teaching John addresses throughout 1 John. It is impossible to fellowship with God apart from Jesus Christ.

The phrase "the Son of God" occurs eight times in 1 John. Six of the eight occur in this last chapter. This is an expression of His eternal relationship with the Father, His deity.

The Greek word for "come" includes the ideas of arrival and personal presence. This word denotes a state of presence. The Son of God came in personal presence in the incarnation.

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

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

and has given us an understanding,

Christians have spiritual understanding through the Holy Spirit (2:20). Gnostics taught that salvation came through speculative knowledge, but not through believing in the incarnate Christ.

"Understanding" is the power or capacity of knowing, the faculty of understanding. Christians received the capacity to know the incarnation Christ at the point of regeneration.

that we may know Him who is true;

Believers can know God in intimate fellowship. "Know" here is knowledge held with assurance, not by the process of acquisition of knowledge.

Notice the three uses of the word "true" in this verse. "True" means real as opposed to the false. Jesus called Himself real or genuine. Jesus' person and work line up with truth. Everything He is and does is in accordance with truth. He not only resembles the truth but He corresponds by His very nature to what is genuine in reference to God. There is nothing fictitious, imaginary or counterfeit about Him. God did not simulate Him. There is no semblance or pretension in Him.

John 6:32 "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.'"

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Principle: The Christian life is life at its best.

Application: The truth of Christianity rests upon Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It does not rest on relative thinking or pluralistic thinking, but upon an eternal person. This truth transcends finite, human truth. No matter how brilliant a person may be, if he has never come to know God personally, he cannot understand the Word of God or its Author. God requires that we be introduced to the Author before we can comprehend His writing.

1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Luke 24:45 "And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

Who wants to know anything about God these days? We want to know how to become a success. We are interested in the stock market and investments. We take interest in political issues. But few of us have vibrant interest in eternal things. People relegate God to the outer edges of the universe.

Those who embrace the incarnation have an entirely different take on God. They not only want

to know about Him but they want to fellowship with Him. They cannot get enough of Him.

and we are in Him who is true,

To abide in God is to abide in His Son. We know the incarnate Christ and we live in fellowship with Him as well. We live in the reality of who God is when we fellowship with Jesus Christ.

John 1:9 "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."

John 6:32 "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.'"

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

in His Son Jesus Christ.

Knowledge of God in the incarnation is knowledge on a personal and intimate basis. This is our spiritual address.

Principle: The spiritual address of every believer is in the same status quo as Jesus Christ.

Application: Every Christian has status quo in God's eyes. When God looks at us He sees Jesus. Jesus is perfect righteousness so we are perfect righteousness. Jesus has eternal life so we have eternal life. Jesus took our condemnation so we will never be condemned.

Rom. 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..."

1 Cor. 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Eph. 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..."

Eph. 1:6 "...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

Eph. 2:6 "...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."

Eph. 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

This is the true God and eternal life

John comes to the summary climax of his epistle – the declaration of Jesus Christ as the "true God and eternal life." The incarnate Christ is the true God (John 1:1, 14) and eternal life (1 John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11-13).

Principle: The Son of God is God almighty.

Application: Jesus is God Himself. He is true deity. As such He carries eternal life. He shares that eternal life with all who know Him. Note these passages on the deity of Christ:

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

John 1:10 "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."

John 17:5 "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

John 20:28 "And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Col. 2:9 "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

1 Tim. 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory."

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

2 Peter 1:1 "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ..."

1 John 5:21

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

We come now to the closing verse and admonition of the epistle. This is John's swan's song and also one of the last New Testament books written.

Little children,

John's final challenge is to the family of God (2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4). "Children" means born ones. John loves his spiritual family.

keep yourselves from idols.

Following false teaching is idolatry. It is to follow an idol of one's own invention. The Christian life will be severely blunted if a believer acquiesces to false teaching.

The word "keep" expresses urgency and decisiveness: "Do not hesitate. Do not fool with false religion because of the serious damage it can do to your soul." The meaning is guard, defend: "Defend yourselves from idols. Do not desert the reality of God's Word for an illusion." Anything or anyone that substitutes for God is idolatry.

An "idol" is anything that represents itself as God. It is a substitute for the real thing. It can be any false idea of who God is. It could be any value that is central and most important to the believer. It is

anything that comes between the soul and the Savior. That might be a person, a pleasure or ambition.

The command to keep us from idols is a command to protect ourselves against spiritual corruption. This command presents a contrast to “the true God” of the previous verse. John pits the true God against false teaching. Their teaching was the idolatry that John refers to here: “Since you already know the true God, defend yourself against any teaching that would violate who God is.” How can we forsake the One who saved us and gave us operating assets for living the Christian life?

Amen

John affirms this principle by the word “amen.” “Amen” means so be it, “I believe it.”

Principle: Faithfulness to the truth is a maxim for maturity in the Christian life.

Application: An idol is any substitute for the real thing. It imitates truth but it is not truth. Whatever robs our worship of God is an idol. It is anything that comes between God and us. It does not have to be a statue but anything we worship over God. It might be our job, our family or success. If we think more of these things than we do of Christ, we commit idolatry. God will not take second place to anything or anyone. This is the greatest threat to our spirituality.

Twenty-first-century idols are as real as the first-century idols. The name may change but the principle behind it does not. First-century people worshiped Narcissus but we worship self. They worshiped Bacchus, the god of booze, and we addict ourselves to drugs, alcohol and things. They worshiped Venus, the goddess of love, and we worship illicit sexual pleasure. They worshiped Apollo, the god of physical beauty,

and we worship the body. They worship Minerva, the goddess of science, and we put great trust in science to answer the ultimate cosmological questions of life.

God equates covetousness and idolatry.

Luke 12:15 “**And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’”**

Eph. 5:5 “**For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”**

Col. 3:5 “**Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”**

God wants us to guard ourselves against anything that would ruin our march toward maturity in Christ. Anything that masquerades as truth will blunt development in the Christian way of life.

We can tell if we are idolaters by what we give our commitment, attention, interest, energy, time or money. Whatever controls our thoughts is our god. What do you get animated about? That is your god. It is the very thing that will crush your Christian life.

It is one thing to have faith in God but it is another to be faithful to Him. We claim the Son of God as our Savior but we reject His sovereignty over our souls. We give ourselves to completely different value systems. Anything that deflects us from Jesus Christ as the center for life is an idol. What we devote ourselves to is our idol. The more we cultivate our loyalty to God and His values, the more free we are from our personal idols.

End of 1 John Course