

THE WORLD--A THREAT TO OUR FELLOWSHIP

1 John 2:15-17

Intro: The last time I spoke on this text was just a few days over three months ago, on May 26 of this year. I included it in my series on *the Christian and the World*. I have often said that we could go over and over the same passage of Scripture and always find something that we had not seen before, I have not made a practice of this in my ministry--at least not dealing with the same verses so close to each other. But in speaking on *the world* I felt the need to take up the whole first epistle of John, and so today we come to these three familiar verses again. Even if I were to repeat what I said last May, I am sure that there would be the need for it in all of our lives today because we everyone of us lives in daily contact with the world and we cannot be reminded too often that we must not love the world, nor the things in the world, if we are to make progress spiritually from day to day.

If you were here last Sunday, I hope that you remember that I tried to bring out that verses 14 through 16, which we considered then, were originally written by the Apostle John in preparation for this warning. Regardless of where we are spiritually, and regardless of where we are age-wise, we all need to be reminded of the truths expressed in our text for today. It is so easy for us to forget them. Would I offend you if I were to say that all of us are influenced more by the world than we realize? And so perhaps, in the providence of God, we have these verses again today because we need them.

The Apostle John was led by the Holy Spirit to write to us and to all other believers about our fellowship with God. We have seen that this involves walking in the light, avoiding sin, being obedient to the Word of God, and loving each other. To ignore what the Apostle John has said about any of these, can seriously hinder our fellowship with the Lord. To abide by what the Apostle has said, will lead us into greater fellowship with the Lord. But a love for the world will keep us from walking in the light, it will make us careless about sin, it will cause us to neglect the Word of God, and it will draw us away from the people of God who should be our best friends and our constant companions. So we need to be very careful to notice what the Bible says about the world so that we can be on our guard. The church today encourages compromise with the world, of all things, for the sake of winning the people of the world to Christ. But such a path will lead only away from the Lord, and if persisted in, to spiritual disaster.

We sing the old hymns of the church here at Trinity Bible Church. One reason it is important for us to do this is because the old writers knew a great deal more about what it means to walk with God than most of us do today. Young people who are growing up today with no knowledge of the great hymns of the church, are being robbed of a very important part of our spiritual heritage. We don't claim the same kind of inspiration for the old hymn writers that we do for the writers of Scripture, but the Lord surely guided them in what they wrote so that we would be helped in our understanding of God and what it means to walk with God.

One of those writers was Isaac Watts. He lived back in the eighteenth century. One of the hymns he wrote we often sing in our services. The first line begins, "Am I a soldier of the cross." It is a question which those who sing his hymn are supposed to answer for themselves. It depicts the Christian life as it is. There are six stanzas in our hymnal, and the first three are questions. The third stanza is important for our time together this morning. It reads like this:

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
*Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?*

How would you answer those questions? When have you heard this world spoken of as "*this vile world*"? And yet how can you describe it in any other way? Has the world with its ways, its temptations, its standards (or lack of standards) ever helped anyone to be a better Christian? Of course not!!! Has it ever brought Christians down in humiliation and defeat? Many, many times!!! Is it doing that today? Without any question. And so we see that this word of God which the Apostle John wrote approximately 1900 years is just as necessary for us today as it was then. Don't let anyone ever tell you that the Bible is out-of-date! The world has not changed one bit from that day until this unless it has been to become more brazen and hardened in its sin.

As most of you know, we recently attended the graduation of our granddaughter, Lara, who finished her university work this summer. Several times we heard people talk to the graduates about going out to change the world. I have heard preachers speak of changing the world. Now it would be wonderful if we could, *but that is not going to be done!* That is not our mission as Christians. We are thankful when sin can be restrained, but the Lord did not change the world, and that is not what we are to do. We hope to see people changed by the power of the Gospel when they are brought to Christ, but the world is not going to be changed.

The Apostle John says in our text that it, lit., *is passing away*. It is under the judgment of God, but it is not going to be changed. The Lord has left us here to bear witness to the Gospel. We are here to preach the Gospel and to see people saved. God is saving people out of the world, but He is not changing it. Society has often been greatly influenced by the spiritual awakenings of the past, but then things eventually go back like they were before. The world is our field of labor, but it is also the scene of our conflict, and it poses great dangers for us as the children of God. But let us consider now what the Apostle John had to say about the world.

Let me read to you 1 John 2:15-17. (Read.)

The text begins with a command, a command issued to every true child of God. This is in verse 15. Then in verses 16 and 17 the Apostle John explained why we are not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world.

So now let us look at the command. And I want to emphasize that it is *a command*--not a suggestion, not one of many options, but *a command*.

I. THE COMMAND NOT TO LOVE THE WORLD (1 John 2:15).

What did John mean by “the world”?

Sometimes this word is used for the earth on which we live, and beauties of nature which we see everywhere. Sometimes it is used for the people who live on the earth. But neither of these is really what John had in mind.

John was speaking of the evil which is characteristic of life in this world. He was speaking of a great world order which had its beginning when man first sinned against God. It is a world system with the Devil at its head. He is “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). He stands for all that is ungodly and unholy. He is the chief ruler “of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12). He is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). He blinds the people of the world to the true nature of everything. He is the archenemy of God, and of the people of God. He makes people live for this life, and seeks to corrupt them in every way possible. He makes good appear to be evil, and evil to be good. It is a great world order which includes every nation on the face of the earth.

All we have to do is to look all around us and we see the world in the way people live, in politics, in society in general. We see the world in the

degradation around us. It is a great system of evil which has affected life on the earth at every level. And the tragedy is that most people don't know what is wrong. It is a world of spiritual darkness, and the darkness has blinded people's minds to the truth. It is a world of sin, of tragedy, of heartache, and death.

But the Devil can make things appear so good and desirable that the Word of God has to tell us NOT to love this world. Lenski pointed out that "love" has to do with the direction in which we exercise our wills, the way we set our purposes in life and make our choices. And to the command, "Love not the world," John added, "neither the things that are in the world." What are "the things that are in the world" which we are not to love? The world's wisdom. The world's pleasures. The world's possessions. And all of this requires money which, when we love it, leads to all kinds of evil.

Instead, we are to love God, and to love Christ, and to love the Holy Spirit, and to love the Word of God, and to love each other.

The word "love" which John used is in the present tense indicating that he is speaking of what is the prominent, continual direction of a person's life. A person who loves the world habitually and continuously cannot be a child of God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Those are strong words, but they are very true. And it takes strong words to wake us up to the realization that we have our hearts set on things that will never satisfy us, things which if they continue to be our main interest in life will only lead us farther and farther from God, and ultimately into eternal perdition.

Now this does not mean that earning money is wrong. It doesn't mean that it is sinful to have a home and a car and the conveniences which make life easier. But it does mean that it is wrong if our main purpose in life is to have money so that we can buy all we want, and go where we want to go, and do what we want to do. It is not wrong to seek promotion in your business, but it is wrong if that is the main reason you are working. The world and its people are headed in one direction; the people of God are to be headed in another direction. The world has no place for God or His Word. Those of us who know God through Jesus Christ are to give God and His Word the preeminence in our lives.

Now this brings us to the Apostle John's explanation of the command he had just given.

II. THE EXPLANATION OF THE COMMAND NOT TO LOVE THE WORLD (1 John 2:16, 17).

I have gone into some detail to try to describe for you what the Scriptures mean when they speak in this way of the world. The Apostle John, speaking by the Spirit of God, said that all that is in the world can be summed up under three headings.

A. The description of the world (1 John 2:16).

Everything falls into at least one of these categories, and possibly into more than one of the three.

1. “The lust of the flesh.”

“The flesh” here is not your body, but your body can, and does, get involved in the gratification of “the lust of the flesh.” “The flesh” here is your old sinful nature, and my old sinful nature. And “lust” has to do with the inordinate, unrestrained desires of our old, sinful nature.

The Apostle Paul was describing the lust of the flesh under the heading of “the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21:

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul gave another list in Rom. 1:26-32 after saying that these are what happens to a society which does not want to have anything to do with God. God doesn’t make people do these things; He just withdraws His restraints, and people go wild in sin. Listen to what Paul had to say:

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:
27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Some of our politicians and our psychologists and some preachers foolishly speak of *the inherent goodness of man*. The Scriptures speak the truth, and tell us that man, every man, woman, and child, is not inherently good, but inherently bad. And the only reason we are not worse than we are is because of the restraining hand of God upon us. But let God remove His hand, and we would quickly destroy ourselves. Sin can sometimes appear very respectable, but it is always abominable in God's sight.

2. "The lust of the eyes."

What we see often produces sinful desires which lead us into sin. It was that way with Eve. It was that way with Achan. Satan tried to trap the Lord Jesus by "showing" Him all the kingdoms of the world. Television using this approach to the full. So do our magazines. It may be a beautiful woman, or a beautiful car, or a beautiful home.

From the time you and I get up in the morning until we go to bed at night, we are always looking. Solomon said, and we find his word in Proverbs 27:20, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." How careful we should be about continuing to look at the things that we see when temptation is involved. And how appropriate even for adults is the little children's song, "Be careful little eyes what you see."

3. "The pride of life."

Martin Lloyd-Jones called this self-glorification. It is our tendency to boast about what we have done, or what we own, or who we are, or where

we have been, or the people we know. It is the person who says that if you believe in yourself and work hard, there isn't anything that you can't do! In these days when we hear so much about self-esteem and self-love, we shouldn't need anyone to help us to understand what "the pride of life" is. Matthew Henry said, "a vain mind craves all the grandeur, equipage, and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this is ambition, and thirst after honour and applause" (Vol. VI, p. 1069). Haman in the Bible is an example of "the pride of life." And so is the man who was going to tear down his barns, and build greater. Peter fell into this when he declared that he would never deny the Lord.

Having said all of this to help us to understand what he meant by "the world," the Apostle John declared that all of this is, lit., *not out of the Father, but is out of the world*. That is, the Father did not make the world like it is. He is not responsible in any way for man's sin. God is sovereign over all of these things, but the Devil and man are responsible for what the world is, and for the worldliness that is everywhere!

But he concluded in verse 17 with a word of hope. (Read.)

Let me call what we have in verse 17

B. The two ways (v. 17).

The world is not going to be here forever. It is passing away with all of its lust. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Every person in this service today, and every person listening to my voice is either in the world, or in the Lord. There is no other place to be--just these two. Where are you?

Some day there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness. It may look now as though the people who are worldly are the ones who are getting the most out of life with their sin and their pleasures and their violation of everything that is good and pure and godly. But all of these things are passing, and those who live for the world and its "things" will some day find out that their lives have led them to eternal perdition and eternal separation from God.

The Apostle Paul was speaking like the Apostle John when he wrote 2 Cor. 4:17-18:

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,
worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of
glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

— In contrast with the people of the world, and going back to verses 12 through 14, by the grace of God we can say that our sins are forgiven, that we know the Father and His Son Who is from the beginning. And by God's grace we can say that we have strength to resist temptation and to overcome the Wicked One because we have not neglected the Word of God, but have it abiding in us.

Concl: Now the big question in all of this is, where we with respect to the world? Does the Apostle John's description of the world tell where our love is, or do we give evidence by the way we live that God has chosen us out of the world, and that our joy and purpose in life is to do what is pleasing to the Lord? If your life is one continuous enjoyment of the world, then the Lord of the Father is not in you, which means that you are not saved.

— May the Lord enable those of us who know Him to make an even cleaner break with the world, its things, and its ways. And if in the light of what we have seen today, you have to admit that you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, then come to Him now, repent of your sins, seek God's mercy, and put your trust in Christ to deliver you from your sins and to make you a new person in Christ.

CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST

1 John 2:18-21

Intro: I want to encourage all of you to read 1 John at least once a week, and more than once if you can possibly work it into your schedule. If you do it just a few times, I am sure that you will see the value of it and that will make you want to read it more and more. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the more you read, the more you will understand, and it is understanding the Word that keeps us coming back for more.

Let me bring us all up to date on what we have learned so far from this epistle. The Apostle John's main theme is fellowship with God--which also means fellowship with God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This speaks of the intimate relationship that we have with the Members of the Godhead--including the Holy Spirit. And this is ours, not because we deserve it, but because God has saved us from our sins through Christ's death on the Cross. By His grace, we have trusted in Christ, and have become the children of God. This is why we can have fellowship with God, and why those who do not know the Lord are excluded unless and until they, too, receive Christ as their Savior.

But in order to understand the basis of this fellowship, we need to know that "God is light," meaning that He is holy, He is righteous, and that there is no sin in Him at all. So if we are to enjoy fellowship with the God, it has to be on the basis of what He is. And so we must avoid sin in any form. We learned this in chapter 1 and the first two verses of chapter 2.

We also need to be careful about being obedient to the Word of God. We see this in the early verses of chapter 2. Disobedient Christians do not enjoy fellowship with God. And then there is the need for us to love each other as the people of God. The Apostle John makes it very clear that we cannot be in fellowship with God if we are out of fellowship with each other. And the reverse is true. We can't really enjoy fellowship with each other if we are not in fellowship with God.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones pointed out in his messages on 1 John that these three obstacles to fellowship with the Lord are *personal* with each one of us, and really have to do with what is wrong within us. It is my sin, my disobedience, and my lack of love for the people of God which can be a hindrance to my fellowship with the Lord.

But beginning with the passage we had last week where we were warned

not to love the world, nor the things of the world, and then moving on to the passage we have for today, we see that there are problems which are outside of us which can hinder our fellowship with God. Last week we considered the world. Today, and for two or three Sundays to come, until we get down to verse 27, we are going to be consider what the Apostle John called, *antichrist*.

The world is all around us, and even though it appeals to what is within us, we face dangers from the world around us that we would not have to face if our environment were different. The same is true of *antichrist*. It is clear that the Apostle John was speaking of people when he spoke of *antichrists*. Let us begin today by seeking to understand what the Apostle John meant by this term, *antichrist*.

I. ANTICHRIST, AND MANY ANTICHRISTS (1 John 2:18).

All of us can see that the last part of this word is the title which belongs to our Lord. He is the *Christ*, the Lord Jesus *Christ*. And we have been taught that the word *Christ*, which comes from the Greek, is the same as the Hebrew word translated *Messiah*. So this title, *antichrist*, has something to do with our Lord.

What happens to the word *Christ* when we put the word *anti* to the front of it? Both of these words, *anti* and *Christ* are brought over into the English from the Greek exactly as they are in the Greek. The Greek is ἀντίχριστος.

Well, the first thing that we should recognize is that when you attach *anti* to the beginning of *Christ*, we are not talking about our Lord anymore. We are talking about someone else.

What does *anti* mean? It means two things that are important for us to understand when we are thinking about *the Antichrist*, or, as the Apostle John said here, “many antichrists.”

- 1) First it means, *against*. So an antichrist is against Christ. He is really an enemy of Christ.
- 2) Second it means, *in place of*, or *instead of*.

So an antichrist is an enemy of Christ, he is against Christ, opposed to Christ, but he comes claiming to be the true Christ himself. He is an impostor who claims to be the Christ. So his first objective is to prove that the Lord Jesus is the impostor, and that He is not the true Christ after all. The Apostle John is the only writer in the NT who used this title.

You will see it twice here in verse 18, once in verse 22, once again in 1 John 4:3, and the last time in the seventh verse of 2 John. And in this last reference John referred to the antichrist as “a deceiver.”

— However, our Lord spoke of antichrists although He did not use this word. Let me read to you from Luke 21:8:

And he [that is, our Lord] said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

In Matthew’s account, we find these words in Matt. 24:5:

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

The Apostle Paul was writing of the Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:3, 4 where we read this:

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

— And then later in the same chapter Paul said this speaking about the same person:

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved (2 Thess. 2:7-10).

— It is not my purpose today to get into prophecy, but I just want to give you enough to show that there is one person who is yet to come who will be called *THE Antichrist*, but before he comes there will be “many antichrists.” “The last time” refers to the period from the ascension of Christ until the Lord returns in glory. So our verse means that sometime in the latter part of “the last time” the Antichrist will come, but all through this period there will be “many antichrists.” All will say essentially the same thing, but none will be as powerful and influential as the last and chief

Antichrist.

If we had the time, we really should consider everything from verse 18 in this chapter all the way down to verse 27. But we don't have the time because there are too many important matters found in these verse. So I am spreading it out over several Sundays. But let me look ahead to verse 22 so that we can understand *the message of the antichrists*. What does verse 22 tell us about *the message of the antichrists*? They will not all approach it the same way, but they all get around to the same teaching. (Read 1 John 2:22.)

You can see that they deny that the Man Jesus is the Christ!

Look also at 1 John 4:3. This is how they deny that He is the Christ: they deny His Deity!

I have been listening to Dr. Johnson's messages which he brought to us at our Family Camp a year ago. Some of you may remember how he spoke of some of the Lord's people who say, "I don't want doctrine, I just want the practical teaching." Or, "I don't want doctrine, I just want Christ." And he pointed out very correctly that you can't talk about Christ without immediately getting into doctrine! And yet our generation of Christians is very soft on doctrine on doctrine. Maybe we should ask ourselves, *Can I defend the doctrine of the Deity of Christ from Scripture?*

This leads me to the next verse. And as a heading, let me ask a question.

II. WHERE DID THESE ANTICHRISTS COME FROM? Cf. 1 John 2:19.

(Read 1 John 2:19.)

I don't believe that the Apostle John was indicating that they have to come from the professing church, but those he was talking about did, and perhaps most heresy does arise from within the church.

The Apostle John was pointing out something about local churches that was true then, and it is still true today: *This is that not everyone who professes to be a child of God is, in fact, a child of God*. Furthermore, he seems to be suggesting here that there is no truth that will separate the goats from the sheep any faster than the doctrine of Christ! Both the OT and the NT stand on the doctrine of Christ. If Jesus Christ is not God, both Testaments are to be cast away. But we can be thankful that both

Testaments do support the Deity of our Lord, and so they form the only solid foundation of our faith. Deny the Deity of Christ and you are attempting to invalidate all of Scripture. How wonderful it is to see that the early church was so strong on this point that the antichrists could not stay around. But that did not mean that they would stop their insidious work. False doctrine has always been a problem facing the true people of God. There have always been antichrists, and there always will be, finally culminating in the coming of THE Antichrist.

How can we protect ourselves from these false teachers? This brings me to my last point for today. Let me call it:

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE TRUTH OF GOD (1 John 2:20, 21).

What did the Apostle John mean by the words we find in verse 20? What is the “unction,” and who is “the Holy One,” and how can be said to any of the Lord’s people, “Ye know all things.”

Obviously John must have been speaking of the knowledge of the truth, the truth of God. We would say today that he was speaking of a believer’s knowledge of Scripture.

Before we go any farther, look with me at verse 27 where you find the word “anointing” twice. (Read.) This is the same word which is translated “unction” in verse 20. So an anointing is an unction, and an unction is an anointing.

This takes us back to the words of the Lord Jesus which are recorded for us in John 14:16, 17:

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Why was the Holy Spirit given to all believers? Listen to our Lord’s words in John 16:13, 14:

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and

shall shew it unto you.

— Therefore, this “unction,” this “anointing,” is the Holy Spirit, and “the Holy One” who has given Him to us is God the Father. Why has He been given to us? There are many reasons, but one of the main reasons is that He has been given to us to teach us the Word of God. If those of us who teach the Word are able to help you in your understanding of Scripture, it is only because we are instruments which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use. *But He is the main Teacher, and everything that you and I know about the Bible, if it is true, we know because the Holy Spirit has been our Teacher.*

It seems that a better rendering of “and ye know all things,” is *and ye all know*. John was not saying that they knew everything that they could know about the truth, but that they all knew enough to know that he was telling them the truth! This is the marginal reading in the NKJV, and this is the reading that is given in the NASB.

Lenski pointed out that since this was a gift of the Holy One, it was permanent—and this was certainly confirmed by Lord when He said that the Holy Spirit would abide with them forever.

— And so the Apostle John took a great deal of comfort from the fact, according to verse 21 that they knew the truth, and they knew that the truth they had been taught was right and could not possibly contain any false teaching (unless it was in reporting what some false teachers were saying).

Concl: What could the Apostle have said that would have given greater comfort to the believers to whom he was writing?

- 1) He was assuring them that each of them had the greatest Teacher of all *in them for ever*.
 - 2) He was assuring them that the truth which God had revealed, and that they could do no better than to continue to believe what they had learned from the Holy Spirit through godly teachers who would not deny anything that the Word of God revealed concerning Christ. All teaching must be examined and accepted or rejected in the light of what we find in our Bibles.
 - 3) It showed again how imperative it is for all of us to know the Word of God. Growing in our knowledge of the Word never means that we proceed from error to truth, but that we are continually getting a clearer and deeper understanding of the truth that we do know.
- Therefore, we need to keep reading the Bible, and we need to attend

churches where we can continue to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). We need to read good books whose writers hold to the absolute authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

We have anti-Christian teachers around us today. And so the warnings which the Apostle John gave so long ago are very needed by all of us today. Christ is the key Who unlocks the Scriptures for us, and any teaching that changes in any way what the Scriptures teach about Christ is an attack upon all of Scripture, and is to be avoided immediately and permanently regardless of how nice the false teachers might be, or how many other things about the Bible that they may agree with. Christ is the test of all of our teaching. The Holy Spirit will never fail to exalt our precious Lord and Savior.

WHO IS THE LIAR?

1 John 2:22-25

WHEN SOME SAY THAT
JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD,
AND OTHERS SAY THAT HE
IS NOT, SOMEONE IS LYING.
WHO? SEE V. 22.

Intro: Last week we were thinking about the “Antichrist.” And we learned that even though in the end times one person shall arise who will be *the* Antichrist, and who will represent all that the title suggests, yet back in the Apostle John’s day at the end of the first century, there were even then “many antichrists.” And this is true down to the present time. I can remember even in my lifetime some who have claimed to be the Messiah. In addition we have had many who do not necessarily claim to be the Messiah, but, if what they do claim for themselves is true, then people would really have no need for the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been uncounted numbers of people who have belonged to the class called “antichrists.” Remember the title means someone who comes *in place of* Christ, but this also means that they are *against* Christ. They are impostors. They are deceivers. But, in spite of this, man who is so prone to being deceived, will turn to these false christs, these false saviors, only to be doomed and damned forever if God in His grace does not intervene with them. But experience tells us that when people turn to and put their hopes in a false christ, rarely do they turn from their error to the true Christ.

THE
DEVIL
“IS A LIAR,
AND THE
FATHER
OF IT”
(JN.
8:44).
SO
DECEIT
IS HIS
METHOD

One of the major problems in the early church was a system of teaching called *Gnosticism*. Much has been written on the teachings of the Gnostics which was a combination of philosophy and religion. It was very influential before the time of Christ, during the time of Christ, and even after. But the important part for us, and the reason we find references to it in the NT (although not by name), is what it taught about our Lord.

There were many divisions to Gnosticism. Sometimes Gnosticism was combined with various parts of Judaism. But they taught doctrines like this: 1) That the humanity of Jesus was not real; 2) that an aeon, which they considered to be a part of God, came on Jesus at His baptism, but left Him on the Cross, so that He was not really God.. You can see that this was an attack upon the Person of Christ which, in turn, would affect the whole Christian doctrine of salvation. So it was definitely *anti-christian* teaching and a serious threat to the early church. The Gnostics always emphasized *knowledge* and claimed to receive it by special revelation. They claimed to have knowledge beyond that which the apostles had given to the church, much the same kind of an emphasis which cults today make when dealing with Scripture. It is the kind of idea that many false teachers try to give Christians--that you have much of the truth, but you don’t have it all, and part of what you have is not

really true.

The Apostle John was thinking of the Gnostics when he started this epistle. (Read 1:1-3.) And in our text for today he was aiming his remarks in a pointed and abrupt way when he asked a question and answered it immediately.

I. THE APOSTLE'S QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER (1 John 2:22, 23).

When dealing with false doctrine the apostles were very strong and clear in what they had to say. (Read v. 22.)

The Greek actually says, "Who is THE liar?" That is, among all people who lie, to whom does this title belong in a very special way? *It belongs to the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ!* That is, it belongs to the person who denies that Jesus, the Man, was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Christ not only means *the anointed One, the Messiah*, but in Peter's confession we see that the title *Christ* was meant to convey also the idea of Deity: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). *So to deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny His Deity!* And the Apostle John says that anyone who teaches this is the greatest of liars! The person who teaches this is an antichrist--not THE Antichrist, but an antichrist, nevertheless. It is not surprising to hear the world deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but what is particularly dangerous is when churches and schools and other organizations which profess to be Christian deny Christ, saying in one way or another that He was not the Son of God. Some deny His virgin birth. Some deny His teachings. Some deny His miracles. Some deny that His death provided atonement for sins. Many deny His bodily resurrection, and scoff at His promise that He would return again. And many combine one or all of these. "Antichrists, the lot of them!", said Guy King in his commentary on 1 John. So we can say with the Apostle John about our generation, "Even now are there many antichrists." There always have been, and as long as time lasts, there will continue to be "many antichrists."

But notice what the Apostle John had to say about what this does to the Father? It is a denial that there is any Deity in the Father as well as the Son. If Jesus Christ is not God, then God must not be God, and Christians who worship Them are not really worshiping God at all! You see, if you deny Deity to one Member of the Godhead, you deny Deity to the

other Two as well.

— This is what the Apostle John went on to say in verse 23. *There is no way that you can have God the Father except by God the Son.* Our Lord said this in John 14:6. So you can see how serious antichristian doctrine is, whatever form it might take--whether the Gnostics in Bible times, or the Jehovah's Witnesses today. To deny is to declare that something is not true. Here it would have been a denial of the OT Scriptures, a denial of the teaching of our Lord Himself, and a denial of the teaching of the apostles. Deny all of that, and you have nothing left!

The last part of verse 23 is in italics (in Bibles where italics are used) meaning that it is not in some MSS. But in versions where it is used, the word for "acknowledgeth" is the Greek word for *confess*: ὁ ὁμολογῶν. So to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, as He claimed to be, as the Father said He was, and as the apostles faithfully declared Him to be--the person who makes such a confession has the Father also. *And in the teaching of the Christian faith any deviation from these great truths is heresy. It is the lie! And the person who denies the Deity of our Lord cannot possibly be a true child of God.*

— I was speaking to a lady this week who knows the Lord. We were talking about her parents, and I asked if they were Christians. She said, "No." And then she went on to say that her father would have nothing to do with the Gospel, but her mother prays and talks about God, *but is completely turned off when you try to talk to her about Christ.* There are millions of people like this in our country. What they don't understand is that if you reject Christ, there is no possible way that you can have God.

And so "who is THE liar?" Who gets the honor of being the greatest liar in the world? It is the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is ridiculous to call Christ a good man if He is not the Son of God. It is ridiculous to call Him a great teacher if He is not the Son of God. If what the antichrists say about the Jesus of the Bible is true, that He is not the Christ, that He is not the Son of God, then our Lord is the greatest impostor Who ever lived. But He is the Son of God. His Word is truth. His miracles were real. His teaching surpasses any teaching that has ever been heard. He did die for our sins. He was raised from the dead. Today He is living in heaven, and some day, perhaps very, very soon, He is going to return. Let us be just as positive about our faith as the Apostle John was as he closes this epistle, and wrote in 1 John 5:20:

— And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,

and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.
This is the true God, and eternal life.

— I trust that the Holy Spirit will impress upon all of our hearts the importance of believing in the Deity of Christ, and that we will never give our time to anyone who denies His Deity in any way. To deny the Deity of our Lord is to destroy any hope of salvation. If He were any less than the Son of God, He could not have died to provide salvation for you and for me. He would have needed a Savior Himself. For many years liberal theologians have been denying the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but claiming to be able to worship God. They talk about God all of the time, but deny what the Scriptures teach about our Lord. Where do they stand with God? They deceive themselves into thinking that they can know God apart from Christ. Those who deny the Son, do not have the Father, but those who confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and our Savior, they have the Father also.

Now in the light of all of this, what is the meaning of verses 24 and 25?

II. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S APPEAL TO HIS READERS (1 John 2:24, 25).

— I have been stressing with you since I began the exposition of this book that the Apostle John's theme was "our fellowship...with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Now what does the teaching of the antichrists do to this fellowship? They would destroy it! What do they give us in its place? *Nothing!* They would take away this precious relationship that we have with our heavenly Father, and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and leave us without anything. If they would, they would take Christ away from us and doom us with themselves to an eternal hell. That is another part of antichristian teaching. They deny the existence of a hell, a place of eternal torment. Our Lord spoke more about hell than anyone else in Scripture, and so to deny that Christ is the Son of God is to deny His teaching about hell. Why would He come to save people if there were not something to save them from?

Now I point all of this out because I want you to get the point of what the Apostle John said here in verses 24 and 25.

He said...(Read vv. 24 and 25.).

— If the antichrist, the liar of all liars, would take Christ and the Father away from us, then there is no question what fork in the road we should

take. The Apostle John would say, “Don’t forsake the teaching ‘which ye have heard from the beginning.’” Why? Because if you hold on to it, “ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” And what does this mean? *It means that your fellowship with the Lord Jesus and with the Father will continue on and be the delight of your soul.* The promise which the Father has promised us is nothing short of eternal life--eternal life now as a present possession, and a life that will never end. What is distinctive about “eternal life”? It is a life of fellowship with the Lord Jesus and with our heavenly Father. It begins when we are saved, and it will never end.

Let me point out something about verse 24 which will be of interest to you. Do you see the word “abide,” and then the word “remain,” and then the word “continue.” They are all translations of the same verb in the original Greek. It is the Greek verb μένω. And all three words, abide, remain, and continue are good translations of that verb.

The Apostle’s point is that they were not to turn to some new doctrine such as an antichrist would preach, but they were to let what they had heard “from the beginning” abide in them. This expression, “from the beginning,” was used in 1:1 to describe the eternal character of our Lord. But here it is used to refer to the time when the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first preached to them, and which they had believed. That message was the truth. Christ did die for our sins, and it is through Him that we have eternal life and have been brought into fellowship with the Son and the Father. So John was saying, “Don’t ever turn away from that message. Let it “abide in you.”

Look back for a moment to verse 19 because we have this same verb in that verse where it is translated “would have continued.” (Read.) One reason people come and go in the church is because they never really were saved. So what we are talking about here is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. A true child of God will continue on in the faith, but the point of our text is that we have a responsibility to see that we are not even turned away for a brief time. The true Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is also called the Gospel of the grace of God, brings us into living fellowship with God. This is eternal life, a life of fellowship with God. It is possible for a Christian’s fellowship with God to be broken for a time, but never completely severed. But the Apostle John did not want the slightest interruption in that blessed fellowship with any of the Lord’s people.

This is what the Lord was talking about in John 15 when He said, using

this same Greek verb, “Abide in me, and I in you.” That little preposition “in” is very important to all of us who know the Lord. Did you notice it here in 1 John 2:24?

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

Salvation is a work of God **in** us. Many people make an outward profession of faith in Christ, but they have not experienced an inner work of God’s grace in their hearts. God’s work begins **in** us, and then the evidence is seen outwardly. A Christian is one who is **in** Christ, and at the same time has Christ **in** him, or her. Paul said, “Therefore if any man be **in** Christ he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Do you remember that several times Jerry Bridges admonished us to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day? This is what we need. We need to remind ourselves that we didn’t save ourselves, nor do we keep ourselves saved. It is only as we walk in fellowship with the Lord, a fellowship of the heart, that we will grow in grace and be preserved from all of the antichristian teaching which is everywhere around us.

Our text concludes with the words we find in verse 25. (Read.)

We were told in 1:2 that “eternal life” is really a title of our Lord Jesus Christ. Later on in the epistle (5:12) the Apostle John said that “he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” So the promise that God has given us is a promise of eternal life, a life of fellowship with the Son of God Who is our life. Christ is our life; He is our eternal life. Never think of salvation as something apart from Christ. He is our salvation; He is our life.

Concl: One thing that stands out in the writings of the Apostle John is the great love that he had for the Savior. His faith in Christ seems to have become unshakeable. He obviously reveled in the fellowship he enjoyed daily with the Lord, and his heart yearned over the people of God that nothing and no one would ever draw them away from Christ. I hope that going through his epistles will have the same effect upon us. May our love for the Lord Jesus be so strong that nothing will ever be able to turn us away from him.

Let me close by reminding you of an event in the life of our Lord which the Apostle John alone recorded for us. It is found in John 6. The Lord had been teaching some of what we call, *the doctrines of grace*. He had

been saying that no one could come to Him unless the Father would draw them. He had said that all that the Father gave to Him would come to Him, and that those who came to Him would never be cast out. Speaking of the inwardness of salvation, our Lord had told the people that unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they had no life in them. After listening to this, *many* said to the Lord, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" The Lord is never surprised at what anyone says, but He expressed surprise that day, and said, "Doth this offend you?" And then the Lord told them that He knew there were some of these who claimed to be disciples who had not believed--that they did not have saving faith. And then he repeated that truth which is so hard for the flesh to bear. You will find his words in John 6:65:

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

And in the very next verse (John 6:66) the Apostle John reported this:

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Many went back, and never came back to Him! Then it was that the Lord said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" And dear Peter, bless his heart, said,

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69).

Right away the Lord told them that there was still one who would go away, and never come back. Of course, that was Judas.

How would you answer the Lord's question, "Will ye also go away?" Today many who have at one time professed Christ as their Savior have gone away. What is your answer? If you are ever inclined to turn away from the Lord, always remember Peter's question, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Peter knew that no one else could forgive His sins. No one else could give him eternal life. No one else could promise him a life of fellowship with the Father. Make sure today that your faith is real, and by the grace of God never let anything or anyone ever turn you away from the dear Son of God. Let people lie all they want to about the Lord Jesus Christ, but praise God from the depths of your heart that you know that He is the eternal Son of the living God.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

1 John 2:26-29

Intro: From the beginning of the Old Testament and on through the New Testament we are continually reminded that the Devil is a deceiver. What is a deceiver?

A deceiver is one who tries to mislead you. He tries to trick you, or fool you. He is dishonest in his dealings with you. He wants you to believe something that is not true, but to accept it as the truth. (Explain.)

The Devil was deceiving Eve when he said to her, “Ye shall not surely die,” after God had warned Adam that he would die if he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Notice that he did not say that God had not said it, but he said that God was not telling the truth. And then he went on to explain why God had told them not to eat of that particular fruit:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5).

The Devil was seeking to get Eve to disobey God, but he did it in such a way as to charge God with lying, and also of withholding from Adam and Eve something that would be beneficial to them--the knowledge of good and evil. In fact, he was suggesting that if they disobeyed God they would become like God, “knowing good and evil.”

False teachers are always deceitful. If they are dealing with the Scriptures, they will do all that they possibly can to get us to doubt the Word of God and to believe some lie that they are telling us. Let me repeat: False teachers are always deceitful and deceptive. That is the reason they are hesitant about telling you who they are. The Devil is a master at deceit. His methods are always sinister and must be considered suspect. Usually, where the Bible is involved, false teachers focus upon something about Christ which they claim is different from what we find in our Bibles. False teachers have always been around, and today is no exception. Paul said that the false teachers were out to corrupt people “from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). By this statement Paul was declaring that there never was any deceitfulness in Christ, but, as Thayer said in defining this word *simplicity*, our Lord was completely “free from pretense and hypocrisy.” People could listen to our Lord teach, and never doubt but what they were hearing was the truth of God. And anyone who denied His teachings, or who taught contrary to what he taught, was a

false teacher. And the same applies to the writings of men who were directed by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote--as were all of the writers of Scripture. Our nation is where it is today morally because people who are leading us are either ignorant of the Scriptures, or refuse to believe that what God has said in the past is still true. And even beyond that, God has given us all a conscience which tells us when things are right, or when they are wrong. So no one has any excuse for lying, or cheating, or living as married with someone of the same sex, or of taking the life of an unborn child which has been a living person from conception. No one has any excuse for taking the Name of our God in vain, nor of doing the same with the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It looks like people are getting away with all kinds of godlessness in our day, but there is a day of reckoning coming, and for some it may not be very far away.

Read the prophets of the OT, and see if you can be comfortable about sin. Or read through the Gospels and notice what the Lord had to say about judgment. And you will find the same warnings in the epistles of the NT such as we are considering here in 1 John. Our text for today begins with these words,

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you (1 John 2:26).

There is nothing more important than that we know the truth which God has given us in His Word, and we ignore it, or violate it, to our own eternal loss.

So let me point out in the first place that in verse 26 of 1 John 2 that we have:

I. A WARNING WHICH WE MUST NOT IGNORE (1 John 2:26).

This warning was given to all believers, but it also has its application to every person who has not faced the necessity of believing the right thing about Jesus Christ, and of making sure that He is your Savior. There is no other way that you and I can possibly prepare to stand before God, as every person will have to do sometime in the future. It is imperative that we put our faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins!

However, in the next verse the Apostle John gave

II. A COMFORTING WORD OF INSTRUCTION FOR ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (1 John 2:27).

Notice there is no command given in this verse about what we are to do,

but it certainly is implied that we need to take advantage of a provision which God has made for us.

A couple of Sundays ago I pointed out to you that the word “unction” in verse 20 of this chapter, is the same word in the original which is translated “anointing” two times here in verse 27.

One thing that every Christian needs to learn about studying the Bible, is that we constantly need to be comparing Scripture with Scripture. The Apostle John, writing toward the end of the first century, was assuming that we are acquainted with what had been written on this subject before. But just in case you are not, let me take you to three NT passages where what the Apostle John was speaking about here becomes very clear.

Please turn to Luke 4, beginning with verse 18. The Lord was in the synagogue in Nazareth, and the scriptures were delivered to Him to read. He found the place in the scroll which is Isa. 61:1 in our Bibles. And this is what He read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...” (Luke 4:18a). We don’t need to read any farther into the verse than that. What I want you to see is that the Lord said that He was *anointed with the Spirit of the Lord*, the Holy Spirit.

Now please turn to 2 Cor. 1:21-22. In these verses we are also told about our anointing. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote:

- 21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;
- 22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Again the anointing is connected with the Holy Spirit. We are anointed with the Spirit. The word *anointed* speaks of the Holy Spirit being *poured out* upon us, as oil was used in OT times for the anointing of the high priest, setting him apart for the work the Lord had appointed him to do.

Let me cite one other passage. In this verse the word *anoint* is not used, but the idea is there. I am referring to our Lord’s words in John 14:16, 17:

- 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
- 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in

you.

These words of our Lord Jesus Christ tie in very well with 1 John 2:27. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:16 that the Holy Spirit would come to abide with the disciples forever. He would not come and go. Under no conditions would He leave them. And we learn later in the same message of our Lord said that the Holy Spirit was given to the people of God to “teach you all things” (John 14:26). In John 16:13 our Lord said that the Spirit of God would “guide you into all truth.” *So the primary purpose of the anointing is that we would be taught the truth of the Word of God.* And every believer today has been anointed with the Holy Spirit so that we can be taught the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit.

Think of what a blessing this is. I think I have mentioned to some of you that when I was in Baylor University and involved in the English Department, I learned that people came from all over the world to study under Dr. A. J. Armstrong, the Head of the English Department, who was the world’s leading authority on the works of Robert Browning. Students often choose the university that they want to go to because they want to be under a certain teacher. Think how blessed we are! There is no greater authority on the Scriptures than the Holy Spirit. He is the Author of Scripture, and He indwells every child of God, each one of us who is saved, and He is with us to teach us the Scriptures! Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks of every year, and every year of our lives, the Holy Spirit is with us to teach us, and to give us His undivided attention. We can’t possibly understand how this can be, but it is true!

And this means that we are not dependent upon the teaching of any man. The Apostle John was especially thinking of those false teachers who try to make us think that we can’t understand the truth without them. Let us be careful not to push the Apostle John’s words beyond what he intended them to mean. He did not say that it is wrong to be taught by men. God has given teachers to His Church. But we always need to have our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and thank Him for every person He uses to help us in our understanding of the Word, and in our ability to live according to the Word.

I believe that the Apostle John was continuing to talk about the Holy Spirit when he wrote, “and is truth, and is no lie.” The Holy Spirit never deceives us. He never lies to us. He always exalts Christ as the Son of God and as the Savior of all who believe. And the result of His teaching is: “Ye shall abide in Him,” that is, *in Christ!*

Now let me give another word of warning. I have known some Christians in my day who have had the strangest ideas that they say they have learned from the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John was not dealing with all of the possible problems in connection with this great truth about our anointing. He was simply pointing out that when we are taught by the Spirit of God, He does not lead us away from Christ. Nor does He contradict anything that the Word has to say about Christ. But He, the Spirit, leads us always into greater fellowship with Christ! A Spirit-taught Christian is going to be a humble Christian, and is going to be willing to listen to others, and to confirm what he claims to believe by consulting everything in the Word of God that throws light on any particular truth. So let us not have a false idea of what John was teaching.

Now let us look at:

III. THE APOSTLE JOHN'S EXHORTATION TO ABIDE IN CHRIST (1 JOHN 2:28, 29).

Many have struggled with these verses, not knowing whether they apply to the Holy Spirit, or to Christ, or even to God. We must not be surprised in Scripture when we see statements which can apply to any of the three Members of the Godhead. After all, they are all God. They all have the same attributes. They all are capable of doing the same things. But in this context it is the Person of Christ that is under attack by the antichristian teachers. And it is about our fellowship with Christ that the Apostle John was concerned even though he has mentioned that our fellowship is with the Father also. See 1:3.

So when the Apostle John wrote in 2:28, "And now, little children, abide in Him," I believe he was speaking of Christ. And the remainder of the two verses of this chapter speak of Christ also.

To abide in Christ is to remain in fellowship with Him. It means that we are not to believe anyone who teaches anything less about Christ than what the Holy Spirit teaches us in the Word. It means that we need to trust Christ. We need to learn more and more about Christ. We need to obey Him. We need to live for His glory. And the purpose is, "that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28b).

Do we realize that when our Lord comes, there is the possibility that we may shrink in shame when He appears, that is, when He will fully manifest that He is both God and man? Learn what the Scriptures teach about

our Lord Jesus Christ, and never, never, never even listen to anyone who wants to make you think that He is less than He is: the eternal Son of God Who became a true human being, without sin, in order to give Himself as a Sacrifice for our sins.

And then the Apostle John concludes this chapter with the words we find in verse 29. (Read.)

Three times in this epistle the Apostle John speaks of our Lord as being *righteous*. Cf. 1 John 2:1; 3:7; and here. And notice that the Apostle John was speaking of the resurrected, glorified, and ascended Christ. He was the righteous One before He died, when He died, and after He arose from the dead. And, therefore, it is foolish to talk about anyone being “born of Him,” of having received eternal life from Him, if they are not living righteously themselves. (Re-read v. 29.)

Concl: From these last two verses we can see that fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ involves two things:

- 1) Holding correct views of Christ.
- 2) Living righteously in this world.

Or, to state it another way, fellowship with the Godhead includes:

- 1) True doctrine.
- 2) Godly living.

Actually a person cannot live a truly holy life if his doctrine is not right. But a person can hold correct doctrine, but not be living a holy life. The greatest fellowship with God and with Christ, a fellowship established and blessed by the Holy Spirit, includes both, true doctrine and faithful obedience--with no exceptions.

In these days when, comparatively speaking, there is very little Bible teaching being done in our churches, we must beware constantly of making God and the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit less than They are. Twentieth century Christians (at least at the end of the century) have very little understanding of the majesty, the infinite perfection, the absolute sovereignty of our blessed God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The level of hunger for Christian doctrine, is very low in these days. And the same can be said for a desire for holy living. And so let us pray that our hearts will be open to all that the Holy Spirit would teach us of Christ and of all of the great doctrines of Scripture. And let us pray with equal fervor that we may not live our lives to please a God-less world, nor to follow the pattern of the world, but that the overwhelming desire of our hearts would be that we might live for the glory of God. This is the pathway that leads to a growing fellowship with God until that day when we see our blessed Lord face to face.

THE ASTOUNDING NATURE OF GOD'S LOVE

1 John 3:1-3

Intro: Many expositors are inclined to feel that chapter 3 in 1 John should begin with chapter 2, verse 28. And that is because we actually have the first mention of the new birth in verse 29, and the Apostle John followed that up with references, not to “sons,” but to *children* (τέκνα) in 3:1, 2. “Eternal life” was mentioned in 1:1, 2, and again in 2:5. But verse 29 of chapter 2 is the first indication we have in the epistle that the means by which we get eternal life, is by birth, spiritual birth, the new birth, being born again or born from above. We are born into the family of God, and it is only when we have this new life that we are capable of having fellowship with God. We are not adopted sons and daughters of God; we are *born-ones*, as the word τέκνον in Greek implies. It is true that we are *the sons of God* as well as *the children of God*, but the distinction between the two does not need to concern us here in 1 John. Just let me make it clear that when the Apostle John is speaking of the people of God in his epistles, it is always as *children*, *born-ones*, never as *sons*.

But, as I was saying, the mention in 2:29 of our being “born of him,” leads on into what the Apostle John had to say in the opening two verses of chapter 3 about our being “children of God.” And I think it is important for us to see this connection. Evidently the thought that we are “born of Him” caused the Apostle John, in a way, to digress for a moment while he marveled that we actually are the children of God, born into His family, not by our own doing, but as a work of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So, as we begin what is chapter 3 in our Bibles, we come, first of all, to:

I. A COMMAND: “Behold!” (1 John 3:1a).

This is a plural verb, so it was addressed to all of John’s readers who knew the Lord, who had experienced the new birth. So the same command applies to all of us who know the Lord. The Apostle John wanted us to stop and contemplate what I have called *the astounding nature of God’s love*. We can very glibly at times quote a verse like John 3:16 without stopping to think of what the Lord meant when He said, “For God **so loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.”

“What manner of love” suggests that we look at the nature of this love, how God has expressed His love, the quality and extent of His love.

Luther called it *a glorious and sublime love* (referred to by Lenski, p 449). Lenski paraphrased the first part of this verse, “Just take a look at this love!” (*Ibid.*). Another writer translates the first of this verse, “Look, what a love the Father has given us.”

If we are to “look” at God’s love, we have to do it through the words of Scripture. For example, 1 John 4:9, 10. This is a love which was directed toward us. And the amazing part of this love is that He would love us. It is not something for to wonder at that we love Him. It is amazing that we have not always loved Him. But that He would love us--that is the astounding part of God’s love. Paul stated it so well in Rom. 5:7, 8:

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Think of it! “While we were yet sinners.” With all of our ugliness and defilement because of our sin, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And that is the second thing about God’s love that we need to contemplate often. Going back to 1 John 4:9, 10, God “sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” Think of the amazing incarnation of the Son of God. He humbled Himself to become a man, and then to die the death of a criminal--and all because of God’s love for us, and because of His own love for us.

And the Apostle John added in verse 10 of 1 John 4 that our precious Lord Jesus Christ by His death became “the propitiation for our sins. He did not for us what we could never have done for ourselves; He has completely satisfied God concerning all of our sins. He took our curse upon Himself, and has forever put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. Cf. Heb. 9:26. He did everything that was necessary for us to be forgiven of our sins and clothed in the righteousness of God. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21.

We could easily spent the rest of our time this morning thinking of the love of God, but let me mention another thing that makes it so amazing. This is that God’s love for us will never end, and it will not even change in the slightest degree. We can grieve Him by our disobedience and sin, but we can never do anything that will make God stop loving us. “What manner of love” this is, the love of God for sinners like you and me.

Our text mentions one of the most astounding of all of the blessings that

have come to us through the love of God. We have been thinking about this already today--it is that we have been brought into God's family, born into His family. *We are the children of God!*

Now let me point out, as the Apostle John did,

II. TWO CONSEQUENCES OF OUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (1 John 3:1b, 2).

The first has to do with the world; the second has to do with our future. One is not very pleasant at times, but the other is a blessing far beyond anything that we could have planned if we were arranging for our own salvation.

First let us think about:

A. The world: "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him (Christ) not" (1 John 3:1b).

The Apostle John touched on this in the first chapter of His Gospel when he said, speaking of our Lord, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The people of Israel as a nation rejected the Lord. The Sanhedrin pursued Him to His death. Most people did not see anything more in our Lord than that He was just a man. The world did not want to have anything to do with the Lord. And the Lord told His disciples very plainly,

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:18-19).

When the Apostle Paul was preaching in Antioch of Pisidia on his first missionary journey, he had this to say about the Lord and His relationship to Israel:

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain (Acts 13:26-28).

Paul was writing about this in his first letter to the church at Corinth. This is what he said:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

The world did not like His teaching. The world criticized His works. They showed no interest in knowing Him. And we know that they hated Him, and were not happy until they had crucified Him.

And it is also true that “the world knoweth us not.” If we are really living for the Lord, we are a strange lot to the world. We are out-of-step with the world—or we should be! The church has taken on so many of the ways of the world today that people in the world don’t see that much of a difference. But that is to our shame. The world doesn’t like our Gospel. The world doesn’t understand why we live the way we live. They are disgusted with our refusal to be “politically correct.” They don’t understand why we can’t “go with the flow.” But our Lord said to the Father in His prayer recorded for us in John 17, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).

Let me say today that if you and I feel comfortable in the world, and are interested in going the way the world goes, and living the way people in the world live, then you may not be a child of God. We read in the fifteenth verse of 1 John 2, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” I am afraid that many have gotten into our churches today who know nothing about the transforming work of the Spirit of God in their hearts. How important it is that we all make absolutely sure that we know the Lord! When we stand before the Lord, all pretense will be gone, and we will be seen to be what we are. The Apostle Paul’s word to the believers at Rome, and to all believers down to the present day, is that we are to give ourselves as living sacrifices to God, refusing to be conformed to the world, but being continually reformed by the renewing of our minds so we can prove “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Cf. Rom. 12:1, 2.

The fact that the world doesn’t know us, doesn’t like what we do and the

way we live, makes life difficult for us in this world. But it is one of the clearest evidences that we know the Lord.

But now, what is the good part?

**B. The “now” and “when” of our relationship with the Lord
1 John 3:2).**

1. The “now” (v. 2a).

Notice the tenderness of the Apostle John. The world may not know nor love the Lord’s people, *but he did!* “Beloved!” He said this again in 3:21; 4:1, 7, 11.

What good word did he have to tell them? “**Beloved, now** are we the children of God.” That is good news, isn’t it? It is not that we will be the children of God some day, but that is what we are *right now!* We are just as much the children of God “now” as we ever will be! And this is a part of *the astounding nature of the God’s love*. He could have saved us without making us His children. He could have forgiven us our sins, and even promised us heaven without making us His children. But we can probably say that this is the most amazing part of salvation: we are God’s children, His born-ones, *right now!* Formerly we were “the children of wrath,” but now we are “the children of God.” *As I have said to you before, when I was born into my parents’ family, they had to take what they got; the same is true of you. But when we were born into God’s family, God was taking what He wanted. After all, weren’t we chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world?*

How did we become the children of God? Let the Apostle John answer that for us. Speaking of our Lord, he said,

- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

We know that we are “now” the children of God. What else do we know?

2. It has to do with “when He shall appear” (1 John 3:2b).

We know two things according to the latter part of verse 2. We know that the Lord is coming. "He shall appear."

We could read this verse like this:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it has not yet been made manifest what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall be manifested as He is, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

John wants us to look now very carefully and constantly and adoringly at the love of God, and all that God has done for us because He loves us, but he also wants us to know that some day, and probably very soon, we are going to see our Lord Himself, and there will be no question then as to Who He is! Then the apostles will not be the only ones who will be able to say that they have seen our Lord in glory.

Now we know also that when we see Him, we will become like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is." When Moses came down from the mount, the glory of God was upon him. But the Apostle John was speaking of something here that will be better than that. Seeing the Lord in His glory for us will mean transformation into His very likeness!

Now, having said that, the Apostle John still had to say that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We aren't capable of understanding such a sight, nor of the glorious transformation that will take place in us! It goes beyond what we can now understand. But we will know then. Oh, how wonderful to be even a little like the Lord Jesus. Nobody has ever said that about me, but someday they will have to say it about all of us. The saints in glory do not have their full glory yet, but it is absolutely certain that it will be ours, for all of us, in that wonderful day when our Lord appears.

So you and I need to spend a lot of time now looking at the love of God, and what God in His love has done for us, but we also need to be anticipating that glorious day when "we shall see Him as He is!"

Now I come to my last point for today:

III. WHAT DO WE DO WHILE WE ARE WAITING?

Our answer is in 1 John 3:3. (Read.)

People talk today about *lifestyles*. This verse describes the lifestyle of every true child of God. Knowing that we are the children of God, and

knowing also that the day is coming when we are going to see the Lord, every day we must be preparing for that glorious day--because it could come at any time, even today! We are to be pursuing holiness. We are to be purifying ourselves, “even as” our blessed Lord “is pure.” That is a big order, isn’t it? How do we do it?

Well, actually we can’t do it by ourselves any more than we could save ourselves. And so the first answer is that we need to spend our lives learning to trust the Lord. Cf. Acts 15:7-9 where Peter was speaking about how God had used him to carry the Gospel to the Gentile world. This is what he said:

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15:7-9).

The work of purification, or sanctification, began in us the moment we are saved, and continues throughout our lives as a work of God, but it requires that we trust the God to make us like His Son. We trust God to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

But we must also use the means that God has given us, first and foremost being the Word of God. The Bible tells us what a holy life is. It is the result of a holy character, and a holy character is produced by the Lord using the Word in our hearts. Cf. 2 Cor. 7:1:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

By God’s grace we say “no” to the world, the flesh, and the Devil and all of the temptations they place before us, and we seek by God’s grace to do His will, to do what is pleasing in His sight. This means staying away from relationships which would make it easy for us to sin and very hard or even impossible to be holy.

And then we must not forget the importance of prayer. The Lord Jesus prays for us. The Holy Spirit prays for us. We need to pray for ourselves. And we need to have others praying for us, as we need to be praying for believers we know that they might be holy.

And let me add one more point. I take it from Heb. 10:23-25:

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

You and I need to be right where we are today--meeting together with the Lord's people, hearing the Word, spending time in prayer and fellowship together, encouraging each other in our pursuit of holiness.

Concl: So let us rejoice that we are the children of God, and remember how undeserving we are of such a relationship to God. And let us remember that we are not going to be here forever, but we are looking for the appearing of our Savior. Then we will finally be like Him, but, in the meantime, we need to be doing all that we can to perfect holiness in the sight of God. May our time at the Lord's Table today mean a step ahead for all of us in our desire to be like our Lord Who suffered and died for ours sins.

A SAVIOR WHO TAKES AWAY OUR SINS

1 John 3:4-9

Intro: The outstanding theme of the Apostle John's first epistle is *fellowship with God*. Therefore, it is an epistle written for *the people of God*, or, as John loved to say, for *the children of God*. We are members of God's family by the new birth. And, as God's children, we are to bear the family resemblance as those who are members of His family. Relating this especially to Christ, we are going to be "like Him. We are to live like He lived. The Apostle John made this clear in 1 John 2:6. (Read.) And to do that we must purify ourselves because He is pure. See 1 John 3:3. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). This is true also of our Lord. Verse 5 of our text for today says this: "In Him," that is, in Christ, "is no sin." The darkness of sin has never touched the character of God, and the same is true of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very unfortunately, it has touched us. It has permeated our whole being. It has made us completely unacceptable to God. But God, in His love, has saved us. He has cleansed us, and has covered us in His own righteousness so that now we are completely acceptable to God because of Christ. However, we are still capable of sinning, and we do sin. That is why we need to purify ourselves from sin as the Apostle John has said in 1 John 3:3. Since we have the guaranteed hope that some day we are going to see the Lord and be like the Lord, we must begin now to purify ourselves from sin. Thus, the Apostle John was emphasizing the personal and practical responsibility that we have in the work of sanctification.

How do we purify ourselves? We are to use the means that God has given us for our sanctification. Bible teachers have spoken of these means as *the means of grace*. This includes the Word of God, and prayer. It includes fellowship with the Lord's people. That is one reason the Apostle John placed such a strong emphasis on the love that we need to show for each other. If we love the Lord's people, we are going to want to be with them, not just for some kind of a social relationship, or for social activities, but for instruction in the Scriptures, for prayer, for the Lord's Supper, and to minister to people in the world who do not know the Lord, but who obviously need to know Him. God in His grace has provided the means, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, for our sanctification, to make us pure and holy as our Lord is holy--not to the same extent, but with the same characteristics.

Now if we are to purify ourselves, one of the first requirements is that we understand what sin is. And so the Apostle John gives us in verse 4,

I. A DEFINITION OF SIN (1 John 3:9).

Please notice that the Apostle John was not afraid to speak of sin. The world doesn't like to speak of sin because sin implies guilt and brings God into our lives.

What is sin? "Sin is the transgression of the law." A literal translation of the Greek would be, *sin is lawlessness*. What law did the Apostle John have in mind? Obviously, it would be the law of God. Where do we find the law of God? We find it in the Word of God. Although we are used to speaking of the revelation which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai as the Law of God, yet that term is not limited to what we might call, the Law of Moses. All of God's Word is the law. It is called the law because it is binding upon all of the people of God. In other words, obedience to God's Word is not optional for us; it is required by God if we are to be sanctified by it.

There are some things that have been required in the past which are not required of us today. Included in this would be the offering of animal sacrifices. There was a time when it would have been sinful not to offer animal sacrifices to God. But since Christ came and offered His perfect sacrifice, we are no longer under that law which says that we must bring animal sacrifices. So we need to be wise and discerning as to what applies to us, and what does not.

But we all need to recognize that the Word of God tells us many things that we are to do, as well as many things that we are not to do. Generally speaking, the Word of God gives us commandments which apply to three areas of our lives:

- 1) First, and most important, are commands that have to do with our relationship to God.
- 2) Second, there are commandments that have to do with us personally.
- 3) Third, there are commandments which have to do with others.

The Word of God has given us commandments in all of these areas of life which we must obey if we are to be holy, and if we are to avoid sin. Some of these commandments are positive, that is, things that we are to do. Others are negative, things which we are not to do. Whether we disobey the commandments of God knowing, or ignorantly, to violate them is still sin.

So, if we are to understand sin, we need our Bibles. And to avoid sin, we must be obedient to our Bibles.

A second point that the Apostle John made in our text has to do with:

II. THE COMING OF CHRIST AND OUR SINS (1 John 4:5).

- In your reading of this epistle have not noticed how many times the Apostle John used the word “manifested”? It is translated with two different words in 1 John: *manifest* and *appear*. Cf. 1 John 1:2 (2x), 19, 28; 3:2 (3x), 5, 8; 4:9.

The word here in 4:5 has to do with one purpose that Christ had in coming into the world. It was that He might “take away our sins.” *Just what did the Apostle John mean by this?*

- At first we might respond by saying that he was speaking about what the Lord did to save us from our sins. That certainly was a major purpose for our Lord’s coming to the earth—to take our guilt upon Himself, to save us from the judgment of God. He surely did that in a most complete way. *But I wonder if the Apostle John did not have something else in mind in the light of the context in which these words were spoken.* The Apostle John was teaching here that one way you can identify a believer is by the fact that he does not continue on in sin that way he did before he was saved. And so I am inclined to think that the Apostle John was saying
- here that the Lord died not only to save us from the penalty of sin, but that He died to save us from continuing on in a life of sin. That would be the reason for his saying, concerning our Lord, that “in Him is no sin.”

That is not true of us now. We still have sin “in us.” That is why we still can sin. But the end of our sanctification is glorification when we will no longer be capable of sin. We don’t reach that state in this life, but nevertheless the day is coming, when we shall see the Lord, that we will no longer be capable of sinning. We will not longer grieve the Lord by our sins.

So our deliverance of sin is not instantaneous, but gradual, and someday it will be complete. This was a part of the Lord’s purpose in coming to save us. We are not perfect, but, by the grace of God, we are being perfected. And someday God’s work of sanctifying is will be completed, and we will be like our precious Lord.

- Now the last four verses of our text tell us how we can tell the difference between one who is a child of God as opposed to one who is not a child of God.

III. THE IDENTIFICATION OF A TRUE BELIEVER (1 John 3:6-9).

Please look with me at verse 6. I hope you remember that I have mentioned before that abiding in Christ means fellowship with Christ. And the person who is so related to Christ that he enjoys fellowship with Christ “sinneth not.”

Now we know that that cannot mean that he is no longer capable of sinning because we all do sin. What John was speaking about was sin as a prevailing habit in contrast with individual acts of sin. A Christian can sin, but he is not going to be living in sin. A person who goes on living in sin has neither seen the Lord, nor has he ever known the Lord. A person who is not a Christian not only has an inadequate understanding of sin, but he has an inadequate understanding of Christ! John was not saying that we have to have some kind of a vision of Christ; he was speaking of understanding Who Christ is, and then knowing Him in a life of personal fellowship. The man who continues on in sin has never really understood Who Christ is, and certainly does not know Him personally in salvation.

Our lives are indicators of our understanding of Christ, and of our relationship to Him. Just as Christ is the key to understanding the Scripture, so our knowledge, true, spiritual knowledge of Christ, is the key to knowing God in salvation. A man can be “a ruler of the Jews,” like Nicodemus was, and yet not be a Christian because he has never really “seen” Christ.

Verse 7 indicates that this is a point on which even many true believers are confused and deceived. The Apostle John was not “talking down” to his readers when he said, “Little children.” He was showing the greatest tenderness and concern. He wanted them to be guided by the truth, not by their emotions. There are many who would make us think that a Christian can be someone who was less than what the Apostle John was describing, but that can never be. It is not the one who talks a lot about righteousness who is righteous *unless he is demonstrating righteousness in the way that he lives.*

Remember that to be righteous, one has to measure up to a standard. What is the standard by which a person is to be accepted as a true child of God? It is the Word of God! And it is *doing righteousness* that counts. Remember what our Lord said. His words are found in Matt. 5:20:

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall

exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

It is not just an external righteousness that the Apostle John was talking about, but a righteousness that is rooted in the heart, a righteousness like the righteousness of our dear Lord.

Notice the statements which the Apostle John made in this chapter so far concerning our Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) "He is pure" (v. 3).
- 2) "In Him is no sin" (v. 5).
- 3) "He is righteous" (v. 7).

These can all be said in an absolute sense about our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the standard by which all Christian living is to be measured.

What can be said about the person who does not live righteously according to the Word of God? He is "of the Devil."

This does not mean that such a person is in a hopeless condition. The Apostle John was simply tracing man's troubles back to its source, the Devil. He is the one who is behind all sin. He has never done anything that was not sin. He promotes sin. He entices people into sin, and then into more sin. And again the Apostle John points to the purpose of the coming of Christ into the world, the reason He has been "manifested." It was that He might "destroy the works of the Devil." Sin is the work of the Devil. Sin brings the judgment of God. Sin brings enslavement to all sinners. People are not able to free themselves from the clutches of sin. That is why Christ came--to undo what the Devil had done. To deliver sinners from the judgment that rightfully was theirs, and to break the bondage which keeps people enslaved to their sins.

And then in the last verse of our text the Apostle John stated again what he had been saying throughout this passage. One who is born of God does not continue in sin. He can't continue in a life of sin because he has the gift of eternal life, which is the seed in him, combating the evil and which in time will produce, by God's grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, what Westcott calls, "the mature man" (p. 107).

Concl: It should be noted that the Apostle John does not trace man's deliverance from the power of sin to a "second blessing," nor to what is called by some "the eradication of the sin nature." But it is traced to the new birth, and what the Apostle John is saying here is true of all believers, the mature and the immature. God has saved us to make us like His Son. That work began when we first knew the Lord. We were

delivered from sin's penalty, now we are being delivered from sin's power, and some day we will be delivered forever from the possibility of ever sinning again. This is our salvation. But let us remember that we have responsibilities in this--reading the Word, believing the Word, obeying the Word--spending time in prayer, and seeking the added strength that comes to us through fellowship with other believers. And all of this is made effective as they become tools strengthening our fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. May God enable each one of us to experience the riches of God's grace through our fellowship with the Lord as we seek to become like He is.

And so let us remember, when we read in the first epistle of John that the Lord has taken away our sins (plural), that it means that in addition to taking away the penalty of our sins through His death on the Cross, He has taken away the power of sin, the necessity that we sin, the enslavement of sin, thus making it possible for us to be purified, sanctified, and ultimately glorified. What a marvelous Savior we have! Let us praise Him daily for all that was accomplished for us at the Cross.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE

1 John 3:10-13

Intro: Today my text is 1 John 3:10-13, but I would like to begin by reading the first thirteen verses of chapter 3. (Read.)

The first epistle of John is probably the most difficult book of the Bible to outline. The reason for this is that the Apostle John did not deal with a subject and then go on to other things, but he continues to deal with certain subjects which were important to his purpose in writing. So we find him repeating himself. Repetition stresses *the certainty* of what he had to say, as well as *the importance* of his message. This was John's style. Some have described his method as resembling a spiral staircase. Years ago when we were in New York City, we went out to the Statue of Liberty. Those of you who have been there, and who have gone up into the statue, know that it has a spiral staircase. You start at a certain place, and then you circle around several times so that you find yourself immediately above where you started more than once. This is like the writing of 1 John. For example, he began by speaking about sin, then, after dealing with obedience and love, he came back to talk about sin, and at the end of his epistle we find him speaking of sin again. But each time he speaks of sin, his message becomes both stronger and clearer. He doesn't exactly repeat himself, but he enlarges upon his subject each time he comes back to a subject which he has touched upon before.

This is what makes it very important to read his epistle over and over. You begin to see how things fit together to show us how we can know that we are saved and thus we be sure that we are among those who have the unspeakable privilege of fellowship with God.

I hope you have noticed that in 1 John (and the same is true of John's Gospel) that the Apostle has much to say about *life, eternal life*. I want to point out some of the verses where we find either "eternal life" or simply "life" so that we can be prepared for what we have in our text for today.

I. "ETERNAL LIFE" AND "LIFE."

I want you to see that the Apostle John really uses both "eternal life" and simply "life" as names or titles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me read five verses to you which prove this:

- 1) 1 John 1:1, 2.
- 2) 1 John 5:11, 12.

3) 1 John 5:20.

Our Lord is called “the Word of life” in 1:1, but then in 1:2 John spoke of our Lord as “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” And in 1 John 5:11, 12 we find that “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” So, if you have the Son, you have life; if you do not have the Son of God, you do not have life. If there is any question about “eternal life” being a name or title for our Lord, it is cleared up by 1 John 5:20. John, speaking of our Lord in the next to the last verse of his epistle, says, “This is the true God, and eternal life.”

A Christian is a person who has eternal life, and he or she has eternal life because he or she has *Christ*. If you have Christ, you have life; if you don’t have Christ, you don’t have life. You can’t be a Christian without having Christ. Christ is our life, our eternal life.

Cf. what the Apostle Paul said in Gal. 2:20:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I,
but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in
the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved
me, and gave himself for me.

You have the same wonderful truth in Col. 3:1-4:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which
are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the
earth.
3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
4 When **Christ, who is our life**, shall appear, then shall
ye also appear with him in glory.

And, by the way, this is a strong argument, this is positive evidence that if you are truly a child of God, you will always be a child of God. The only way something could happen for us to lose our salvation would be for something terrible to happen to Christ. Because He lives, we too shall live. And we will have eternal life as long as He lives--and He is eternal.

Before you and I were saved, we were dead in our trespasses and our sins. We were without eternal life. But now that we have Christ, or better, that He has us, we have eternal life.

Now let me take us a step farther and speak of:

II. THE CONSEQUENCE OF HAVING CHRIST AS OUR LIFE.

By this I mean, what effect will this have upon us? What will be the result of having Christ as our life?

Now what I am about to say, I would not dare to say if it were not what we are taught in the Word of God. But look back at 1 John 2:6 and let me read that verse to you:

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

IF CHRIST IS OUR LIFE, THEN OUR LIVING SHOULD BE LIKE THE LORD LIVED--NOT PERFECTLY LIKE HIS, BUT THE EVIDENCE OF A CHANGE IN US WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE THERE! Cf. Gal. 2:20 again. "We shall be like Him," the Apostle John taught us in 1 John 3:2, and that likeness began to show up when we first trusted in Christ. And the longer we walk with Him and the more we trust in Him, the greater will be our likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And some day that work in us will be completed. Paul told the believers at Rome,

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, **he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

So God is making each one of us like His dear Son. And He is doing this by the power of Christ Who lives within us. He works in us through His Word, in all of our circumstances, by burdening us to pray. This is the "good" of Romans 8:28.

But now we need to take all of this another step farther. What should we look for as the evidence that we really know the Lord? In what way will we be made like our Lord Jesus Christ? At this point I want to consider with you the two words I have taken as my subject for this message:

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE--THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHILD OF GOD.

Look with me at 1 John 3:10, the first verse of my text. (Read.)

The Apostle John stated it negatively here, but it is easy to say the same

thing in a positive way. How do you tell a child of God from a person who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior? A child of God will be characterized by righteousness and love--not human righteousness nor human love, but by divine righteousness and by divine love. And it is not by righteousness OR love, but by righteousness AND love.

Let me speak of righteousness first.

A. Righteousness.

Seeing the place that these two words, righteousness and love, have in this epistle, has helped me draw this whole epistle together.

Where do we start with righteousness? We start in 1:5. "God is light." And you will note in that same verse, as well as in the two following verses, that "light" is contrasted with "darkness." "Light" is a symbol in Scripture for righteousness; "darkness" is symbol for sin, or unrighteousness.

We learn from 2:1 that "Jesus Christ" is "the righteous" One.

In 2:29 we have this statement: (Read.) 1 John 3:3 tells us that our Lord "is pure," and in verse 5 that "in Him is no sin, and in verse 7 that "he is righteous."

So, if we are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be righteous. You know that we covered in the righteousness of God. This is what it means to be justified. But the Apostle John was speaking of practical righteousness; he was speaking of practicing righteousness, being righteous in our personal character and in our daily living. How is that possible? *It is by being obedient to the Word of God, by being obedient to the commandments of Scripture.* The Word of God tells us what sin is. To avoid sin is what we must constantly be doing if we are to be righteous in God's sight.

We don't have to go outside of 1 John to find some of the commandments of God. In 2:1 we are told not to sin. In 2:15 we are told not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world. In 2:28 we are told to abide in Christ. In 3:7 we are told not to let anyone deceive us. The only way we can avoid being deceived is by knowing the Scriptures. In 3:13 we are told not to marvel if the world hates us. In 3:18 we are told not just to love in word or in tongue, but "in deed and in truth." And so on and on. As you and I read our Bibles we need to notice the many, many times that

we are told *to do* certain things, and *not to do* other things. We can't be obedient to the Word in our own strength, but through the life of Christ in us, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live lives that are pleasing to God, and we can be the kind of people that the Lord wants us to be.

Being righteous comes right down to whether or not we keep our cars under the speed limit, and whether or not we are honest in paying our taxes and all of the other bills we may have. And all of our obedience must come from our hearts.

So righteousness is one of the characteristics of "eternal life"; love is the other.

B. Love.

Verse 10 of chapter 3 makes a second transition from what the Apostle John was saying about righteousness to what we wanted to say about love.

Love is just as much a part of the life we have in Christ as righteousness is. The command that we should love one another is as old as time. Remember how the Lord answered the question about what was the great commandment in the law. There were two of them. (Quote them.) Cain is cited as an example of what a child of God will not do. You can see that Cain could not be right with Abel as long as he was wrong with God. He brought an offering to the Lord. That was more than most people do. But he did not bring the kind of offering that God wanted him to bring. The Apostle John said that Cain's works were evil. They were evil because he was ignoring what God required. Cain and Abel had the same parents. They both were raised in the same home. But Cain "was of that Evil One," and therefore it was impossible for him to do anything that was pleasing to the Lord. Cain was of the world; Abel was of God.

Not only is God righteous, but God is love. The world likes to speak of God (if they speak of God at all) as a God of love. Worldlings despise His righteousness. It is interesting that the Apostle John spoke of the righteousness of God before he spoke of the love of God. And yet both are equally important.

Twice the Apostle John said "God is love" (4:8, 16). This more than saying that *God loves*. It means that if you want to define what love is, go to God and learn of Him. What we see in God is the definition of love. What the world calls love is too often a perverted love. In God we

have pure love. In 4:9, 10 we have God's love defined for us, the kind of love we are to manifest in our dealings with people. Love is to include our family members, or people in general, but it especially has application to those who are in the family of God with us. And yet, as was the case when the Lord manifested love, He was hated intensely by the people of the world, even the religious crowd. And perhaps it was, as Bishop Westcott said, that the love of believers is evidence of the new life that they have in Christ, and this is what the world rejects and despises, even looking upon Christian love as a sign of weakness.

The words which we have in verse 13 are words similar to those which the Apostle John heard the Lord Jesus say some 50 or 60 years before as the disciples were going with the Lord from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. He had never forgotten them, and he had experienced the truth of them many times. We find the Lord's words in John 15:18-25:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

There is a real tendency today to cater to the world with its music, and its comedy, and many forms of entertainment, in the hope of making friends with the world. It didn't work in our Lord's day, and it won't work in our day. The Cross is offensive to the natural man. It attracts his hatred because it strips man of his every claim upon God, and leaves him standing alone, dependent only upon the mercy of God. Love carries with it

the idea of benefitting others, leaving them better than they were when we found them. And that is the object of all Gospel preaching. We do not give people what they think they need, nor what they want; we give them what they really need: the Gospel of Jesus Christ with its message of reconciliation with God.

Concl: Remember that to be a Christian is to have Christ. And the evidence that we have Christ will be that we will be like Christ-- in what we are, and in what we do. We will never be completely like the Lord until we are with Him in heaven, but the evidence must be there now or we cannot rightly claim to be the children of God. Let us examine our own hearts in the light of Scripture to make sure that we truly know the Lord. But let any who do not know the Lord realize that you can know Him today, not by trying to be like Him, but by seeing that you are dead in your sins and that only Christ can give you life, "eternal life." And it is only through Christ and what He did for sinners when He died on the Cross that we can be saved, and find full and eternal acceptance with our God Who is righteous and Who is love.