

## A JOYFUL DECLARATION

1 John 1:1-4

Intro: We often encourage new Christians to read the Gospel and Epistles of John. They are probably the easiest Greek in the NT. But, while you have great simplicity in John, you have great depth -- so there is something in John's writings for believers in all stages of spiritual growth.

He speaks in the first person plural as representing all of the Apostles, of which he lived the longest.

There is no change in the truth from the earlier days. His Christology is in perfect agreement with that of Peter and Paul.

He is concerned with life, eternal life, which dwells in <sup>very flesh</sup> God, was manifested in Christ, and experienced by all who truly believe.

So John preaching the Gospel was not the light matter that it is in so many places today. To him the Gospel was

- 1) Rooted in eternity.
- 2) made known by divine revelation (or it would have been concealed forever).
- 3) Revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) Preserved for future generations in the scriptures - written.

He is not long in stating his purpose, but let us see how he leads

up to it.

- I. An eternal reality. Cf. 1 Jn. 1:1, 2.  
 It was "from the beginning" (v. 1).  
 It was "eternal life" (v. 2).  
 It was "with the Father" (v. 2).  
 Cf. John 1:1-3; Rev. 1:8.

We are not dealing with life which had a beginning. Nor is this a life which changes or develops in God. It is the only eternal reality that there is -- the eternal life of God, about which the Apostle John has so much to say in all of his writings.

- This would have been true if Jesus Christ had never come, if the Bible had not been written, but it would have been concealed from us -- and could have been.

- II. The revelation, or manifestation, to John. This was the final, the ~~completed~~ <sup>final</sup> revelation of God. How wild would have been the reports had been if the Lord had not carefully selected His reporters! But it was for them first.

Cf. vv. 1, 2, 3.

Cf. John's testimony in John 1:14.

Cf. Peter's in 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

- Remember the mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17). Think of what John says about the first miracle. Remember the experience in the Garden when the soldiers fell back!

1 John 1:1-4 (3)  
III. The declaration to the readers of  
this Epistle. ~~Cf. 2 Pet. 1:19-21~~ Cf. 1 Jn. 1:2, 3.  
Peter goes on to say how the  
Lord had provided for an accurate  
account. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:19-21; see also  
2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

These men were not to keep it to  
themselves, but it was to be preached  
and permanently recorded in writing.

How important it is to God, the Father,  
that we get all of this straight, that  
it is accurately recorded.

But why was all of this made  
known?

This brings us to John's statement of

IV. A Twofold Purpose -- one in v. 3,  
and the other in v. 4.

A. "That (in order that) ye may have  
fellowship with us, and truly our  
fellowship is with the Father, and  
with his Son Jesus Christ" (v. 3).

Fellowship indicates a participa-  
tion, a communion, a most  
~~intimate~~ relationship. It was  
with three:

- 1) The Apostles
- 2) The Father.
- 3) Jesus Christ.

Fellowship

- commences with salvation
- continues in sanctification
- culminates in glorification.

Cf. 1 Cor. 1:9.

What this means is that we not  
only learn about God and Christ, but

we have a part in all that they are, and enjoy the same privileges that the Apostles had.

B. <sup>(in order that)</sup> "That your joy may be full"  
(v. 4). Some MSS say "our." Either way it is a message for us.  
God obviously desires our happiness.

And He has made provision for it to be "full," i.e., complete, lacking nothing that needs to be added to it.

Cf. John 15:10.

Concl.: Thus, you cannot be a Christian without Christ.

It is vitally important to believe the truth concerning Him - that He reveals God, and brings us to God.

How precious is that "fellowship"!  
How great is that "joy"!

THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

1 John 1:5-2:2

Intro: John has already mentioned that the eternal life which was with the Father "from the beginning" was specifically revealed to the Apostles, and the Apostles have passed on that revelation through preaching and

through writing

to those believers, first of all, who were receiving this epistle, in order that they (and believers of all succeeding generations) might have fellowship with the Apostles -- the unique thing about that fellowship being that it was

"With the Father,

and with his Son Jesus Christ."

To "have fellowship" is to enter into a living relationship with "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" -- that is, it is to enter into living union with that life, to participate in that life. "That eternal life" becomes your life, and my life!

Now -- if that is to be the case, we must understand the nature of that life. And to understand the nature of that life we must understand the nature of God.

That is the subject of verse 5. This is

I. THE FOUNDATIONAL MESSAGE OF ALL OF SCRIPTURE (1 John 1:5).

This is surely the foundational message of salvation. All talk of salvation has to begin with God. It is impossible for man to understand his own need if he does not know at least this much about God.

What is the one, basic, fundamental truth about God that we must know? It is this: "God is light."

And then John follows it up with this statement: "and in him is no darkness at all."

The statement could not be any stronger. It is not that God is light, but not all light -- that there are parts of darkness (or at least gray) to His character, but He is ALL light, and nothing but LIGHT!

What is meant by "light"?

It means that He is absolute purity. He is the utmost of moral perfection. There is nothing sinful about Him. He has not sinned, nor is He capable of sinning. In fact, as "light," He is the standard by which all the acts of men and angels are to be judged.

Note what James has to say about God in James 1:17,  
 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from  
 above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,  
 with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of  
 turning."

Paul is speaking of God when he writes,  
 "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light  
 which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen,  
 nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.  
 Amen" (1 Tim. 6:16).

There are many other implications in the thought that "God  
 is light," such as that of perfect knowledge, or of His  
 desire for self-revelation so as to dispel the darkness,  
 but I want to stay with this one emphasis because this is  
 where John is placing his emphasis! He is dealing with  
a holy God. Habakkuk wrote,

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and  
 canst not look on iniquity . . ." (1:13a).

Thus, eternal life is a holy life. God has made it known  
 through His Son, and we see the "light" of eternal life  
 in the sinless perfection of Jesus Christ.

This is the foundational message of all Scripture, of all  
 salvation -- and we can never hear too much about it!

But John is teaching us, and so he goes on next to show us

## II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS TRUTH (1 John 1:6-10).

Remember that we are still talking about fellowship with God  
 -- that is, sharing the very life of God.

Here are the consequences: If we have this eternal life,  
 two things will result:

- 1) We will want to life in that light -- which means that we  
 will desire a holy life.
- 2) We will recognize how utterly sinful, how un-like the  
 light, we are in ourselves. No one will ever get an  
 argument out of us about human depravity.

The first of these two consequences is to be seen in verses  
 6, 7; the second is in verses 8-10.

But we are immediately confronted with a problem. It has to  
 do with man's tendency to depend more upon his talk than his  
walk!

When a person's talk is contradicted by his walk, what do you  
 pay the most attention to?

There can be no conflict. The walk tells the true story -- and it is our walk which indicates that "we have fellowship one with another," i.e., our fellowship with God.

We can still sin, or there would be no reason for the last part of verse 7, but sin is not the dominant characteristic of our lives.

What about the second consequence?

What is the difference between verse 8 and verse 10 (the first part of each)? Verse 8 seems to speak of our sin nature while verse 10 speaks of our sinning (our sinful acts).

Here again notice the trouble with the tongue.

In one case we "deceive ourselves"; in the other, "we make" God "a liar, and his word is not in us."

Notice how "the truth" enters into verses 6 and 8 and 10.

Instead of denying our sin and our sinning, a true believer in his desire to walk in the light will be confessing his sin, acknowledging that it is just as real and just as bad as God says that it is -- which is the meaning of the word, "confess."

Alright -- so far John has taught us that God is pure holiness, and that if our claim to have fellowship with Him is a true claim, then we will walk in the light.

But he has also indicates that this will not be a perfect walk because of the fact that we have sin and are still capable of sinning -- sins need to be confessed, and need to be cleansed in the only way that sins can be cleansed: through "the blood of Jesus Christ."

But, does John have anything else to impress upon our hearts by his discussion of fellowship and sin? Yes! He speaks of

### III. THE INTENTION WHICH HAS PROMPTED HIM TO SAY THESE THINGS: "that ye sin not."

Just because we can sin is no reason that we should sin. In fact, just the opposite is the case. We must avoid sin.

BUT -- if we do sin -- "if any man sin" -- we must not think that we have failed to be saved, or that we need to be saved all over again. If you have the evidence mentioned above, then remember these important truths:

- 1) "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

He does not become that when we sin, but He became that when He died. His righteousness is sufficient for all of our unrighteousness.

But there is another truth related to the first truth:

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

If this were not true, then fellowship with God would be an utter impossibility. Jesus Christ has perfectly and completely satisfied God -- yes, and even eternally -- concerning our sins. He has satisfied God for all of our sins -- even the sins that I may commit tomorrow!

When did He do this?

He did it at Calvary! Note what that word "propitiation" means -- the strength of it.

But then somebody says, "What about the last part of the verse? Is this not universal redemption -- that Christ died for the sins of all men throughout the world?"

If you write PROPITIATED over all of the sins of all men, then what do you have? Universal redemption leads to universalism. If John means to say that Christ died for all men, then we have to say that he is also teaching us that all men will eventually be saved. And yet the very people who say that Christ died for all men deny that Christ is the propitiation because they say that His work is not complete until we add our faith to it! Let them try to explain it away, this is still what they are saying.

Well, then, what does it mean that "he is the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world"?

It means this -- that Jesus Christ is not just the Saviour of Jews, but that He is the Saviour of Gentiles as well, of people throughout the whole world!

Who were the recipients of 1 John?

Sidlow Baxter says that the last 9 epistles of the NT "are distinguished from the earlier epistles by their distinctively Hebrew standpoint and atmosphere" (Vol. 6, p. 259).

Even if you do not accept this opinion, there is little doubt but that John is using the world to show that the coming of Christ was not to be restricted to the early converts, but that it was a message to be given to all men, Gentiles as well as Jews. Cf. Rev. 5:8-10. This salvation is not a vague work of God, but a specific work for a specific people -- and this is our hope and joy.



Concl: This is the message -- that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

No teaching regarding salvation can ignore this. God would not have a salvation that allowed men to continue on in their sin. The death of Christ is sufficient for the sins of all believers, and His sacrifice is the only basis on which any man can have fellowship with God.

## LOVE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

1 John 2:9-17

Intro: From the first part of ch. 1 John's expressed purpose has been to tell them of Christ -- for the sake of FELLOWSHIP.

It fulfills his joy (1:4) -- a delightful insight into the heart of the Apostle in his old age.

But true spiritual fellowship is only possible with those who are truly saved. It has to be on the terms of God's nature -- which is light. Therefore, if we are to claim fellowship there are certain evidences --

- 1) Concerning sin (1:6-2:2).
- 2) Concerning the Word of God -- His commandments (2:3-6).
- 3) Concerning love for the people of God (2:7-11).

This latter point leads to an elaboration -- expressing the reason he has written from their standpoint

He speaks to all of them first (v. 12) -- calling them TEKVIA (as in 2:1). Also 2:18, 3:7, 18, 4:4, 5:21. A teachers term for his disciples. Then he speaks in three classes:

- 1) Fathers (v. 13a).
- 2) Young men (v. 13m).
- 3) Children -- Παιδία (v. 13t).

It may be that v. 14 is an attempt to fill out the trilogy by some who did not pay attention to the diff. between Παιδία and TEKVIA.

Now this John goes on to speak of

indicating endowment.

1 Jn 2:9-17 (2)

a love war is prohibited, and why, in 2:15-17.

Even "~~brother~~" is beloved in the best MSS, seeming to link vv. 7, 8 with 9-17.

But let us begin by looking at v. 9.

I. Note the interrelationship with all that John has been saying.

We have "light" and "love" and "darkness" in vv. 9-11.

True fellowship is impossible apart from salvation, and salvation always begins with light - moral purity.

Thus, to be "in the light" is to know the Lord, and to say that you are "in the light" means that you are in fellowship with the Lord.

BUT IF YOU DO MAKE THIS CLAIM, BUT HATE (i.e., reject) YOUR BROTHER (i.e., others who are <sup>turned away from</sup> the Lord's), THEN YOU ARE IN DARKNESS.

v. 10 - "an occasion of stumbling" is an inconsistency which others cannot figure out. People cannot ~~hate~~ a person who claim to be in the light and who rejects others in the light.

v. 11 - the only conclusion that we can come to -- that the person who makes such a claim only does so because he is in darkness himself.

II. A reassuring word (2:12-14).

Note the comments on this section in the Intro to this message:

- 1) V. 12 is addressed to all
- 2) V. 13 includes all three classes of believers in terms of maturity.
- 3) V. 14 restates V. 13 m + b, but may be an added gloss.

Note the differences - children just beginning, young men in their prime, fathers in the mature years. This must be spoken spiritually because there is no place otherwise for the women and girls.

Note how these point back to what has preceded, and even to John's old age, his mature years, delighting in "him that was from the beginning" (2:13a).

### III. Forbidden Love (2:15-17)

Love for God comes first (V. 5).

Love for believers follows, and always accompanies the first (vv. 9-11).

Note the two commandments in Mt. 22:34-40.

Love for the world is not to be tolerated, but excluded, rejected, forbidden.

A. Is it possible for a child of God to be involved or this prohibition would be meaningless?

What is the world -- this special use of the term? Calvin says that it is "every thing connected with

the present life, apart from the kingdom of God and the hope of eternal life" (XXI, 186).

It is that realm in which Satan rules, that which appeals to our flesh -- the world of things and sins and all kinds of godlessness. There is a wisdom of this world.

We are helped to understand it by:

- 1) Eve's Temptation
- 2) Our Lord's Temptation.

There are methods resulting from the world's wisdom. Money is a big part of it. Pleasure also. A form of godliness.

BUT NOTE A SECOND POINT.

B. Where you find the preeminence of a love for the world, you will not find a love for God (2:15b).

There can be no middle ground here.

The reason is stated in 2:16 with the detailed description of the world.

C. The contrast between doing the will of God, and the world.

On "passing away," cf. v. 8, "is past."

The two are identically the same expression in the Greek:  $\pi α ρ α γ ε τ α ι$ .

The will of God brings us back to the Word of God. Cf. Mt. 24:35.

Concl: Where does this leave us?

Obviously John is not talking about perfection in any of these but he is talking about the presence of all:

- 1) The knowledge of God.
- 2) A walk in the light -- departing from sin
- 3) The Word of God
- 4) Love -- for God and for His people, but not for the world.

We need never fear to test our profession. If it is not true, we can be led to the truth. If it is, it will confirm and strengthen our delight in the things of the Lord.

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## THE WORLD AND THE CHRISTIAN

1 JOHN 2:15-17

Intro: Up to this point John's emphasis has been mainly positive. A true child of God is one who:

- 1) Walks in the light, and does not live in sin.
- 2) ~~He~~ Keeps the commandments to back up his claim that he knows the Lord.
- 3) Love the brethren.

now his emphasis takes on a more negative note (See the text: 2:15-17.)

He tells them what a Christian will not do exclusively, and why not! The very fact that it is here indicates a possibility which constitutes a real threat.

and so let us note, first of all,  
I. THE DETAILS OF THE TEXT.

A. The prohibition - twofold:

1. "Love not the world."
2. "Love ~~not~~... ~~rather~~ the things that are in the world."

B. The nature of salvation: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

This shows why it is impossible for such a thing to be in an exclusive sense.

C. The reasons behind of prohibition:

1. The world is "not of the Father."
  - a. He did not make it what it is.
  - b. He is not pleased with what it is.
2. The world is passing away.
  - It is only a temporary order.
  - It is presently passing away, i.e., on the way out. To go after it is like chasing a cloud.
3. Positively - "but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

But now there are many things in these ~~two~~<sup>three</sup> verses which demand an ~~apple~~ ~~in~~. So let us think about

## II. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT.

### A. The meaning of the word, "world."

The similarity of words in 1 Jn. 2:15 and John 3:16 demand an explanation -- the way the words "love" and "world" are used. One verse says that "God so loved the world"; the other says that we are not to. Of course it would be within God's sovereign right to do what He forbids us to do. But is that the case here? We think not.

In John 3 our Lord is speaking



of His elect through the world -- Jewish and Gentile. Cf. "us" in Rom. 5:8. The love of God is a theme for the elect, for the saints, for believers. And the coming of Christ was an expression of His love for them -- and of Christ's death for them.

But what about 1 Jn. 2:15.

Here the term "world" is defined as something evil, something which we are not to love, not to prefer, not to help.

The expression "not of the Father" means that, whatever it is, the Father did not originate, nor does He approve of it, nor will He support it, but He has already condemned it.

John speaks of both "the world" and "the things that are in the world," so it has to mean that there are "things... in the world" that are worldly!

This would include the world's people, the world's way of life, which would include the world's objectives and goals. In short, this is humanism in all of its ramifications!

← But John gives us some more help --

B. The make-up of "the world." There

are three descriptive terms which he gives here:

1. "The lust of the flesh."

Some passages which will help us:

a. Titus 2:11-15.

This even has to do with food - cf. Prov. 23:1 ff.

This speaks of "all iniquity" in v. 14, "lusts" in v. 12, showing that man is drawn to any and everything that is sinful.

b. Rom. 13:12-14.

c. 1 Pet. 2:11.

2. "The lust of the eyes" -- which so often leads to other sins.

Cf. the temptation of Eve.

Cf. the temptation of Christ

on "the lust of the eyes," cf.

Prov. 4:23-27.

What about a covenant with our eyes? Cf. Job 31:1.

See Psa. 119:37.

Cf. Achan in Joshua 7:21.

Cf. re: a harlot in Prov. 6:25.

Think of the temptations we have with TV, magazines, books, dress, <sup>and</sup> etc.

3. "The pride of life" -- our self-worth emphasis fits right into this, boasting, pride along with its contempt of others. This places speak emphasis on man's way of life as opposed to God's. It is self-centered gratification.

Cf. Jas 2:13-16 (esp. v. 16).

The term Bios speaks of life style with its emphasis on money, ~~income~~, position (status), education, etc. -- all centered in us.

Cf. Luke 12:15.

### III. THE PROMISES OF THE TEXT -- TWOFOLD.

Perhaps we would not think of the first as a promise, but it is -- an absolute certainty, just as the second is.

A. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

B. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Generally speaking this means that if you fix your life to this world, all will be lost; if you do God's will, and live for Him and seek the holiness that comes through obedience, you and all that you are and do will endure forever!

Concl.: 1 Cor. 7:31

Rom. 12:1, 2

1 Tim. 6:5, 6

Matth. 16:24-26

THE DAYS OF ANTICHRIST  
1 John 2:18-29

Intro: I find the writings of John Calvin very helpful from many standpoints. One of them is his frequent reference to Pastoral Theology (which has to do with the work of the pastor). In one of his volumes I found this statement:

. . . it is the duty of a good and diligent pastor not only to gather a flock, but also to drive away wolves: for what will it avail to proclaim the pure gospel, if we connive (meaning to ignore or to pretend that we do not see it) at the impostures of Satan? No one, then, can faithfully teach the Church, except he is diligent in banishing errors whenever he finds them spread by seducers. (Calvin, XXII, 199)

Such is the ministry of John here.

He has been speaking of personal problems related to salvation:

- 1) The problem of sin.
- 2) The problem of obedience.
- 3) The problem of love.
- 4) The problem of the world.

Now he turns to a problem that has existed for 2,000 -- the problem of antichrist.

The people were not ignorant on this subject, nor were they on many other subjects which had to do with the Word of God, as the following verses show.

But those who fell into this category of antichrists are called later, in v. 26, seducers. The most subtle thing about them is that they had been within the church, but they had left. The trouble was that they were trying to get others to follow them out. It is always harder on churches to stand up under trouble that arises from within than which enters from the outside. The Devil is very clever in his deceptive work.

And so, as a faithful pastor and elder, John is, first of all, sounding

I. A WARNING (1 John 2:18).

Let us make sure that we understand the words that he is using.

- A. "The last time" (which it has been now for almost 2,000 years).

This means that nothing really needs to be fulfilled before the Lord can come. There are many different views of the coming of the Lord, but remember that no view can

be right which does not allow us to expect the return of the Lord at any moment. How long these days last, the Lord has not told us. But it is for us to be looking for Him anytime!

While we wait, God in His providence has permitted "many antichrists" to come and go. We can say even about our day, "even now are there many antichrists." But what does this word mean?

#### B. "Antichrists."

Notice that John distinguishes between one special Antichrist, as compared with antichrists (plural).

"Antichrist" means two meanings:

- 1) Against Christ -- and this is what we always need to remember. It has to do with men and their teaching which is opposed to Christ, which denies the truth concerning Christ.
- 2) Instead of Christ, or that which poses as Christ. In other words, the antichrists seek to take the place of the true Christ by setting themselves up as the one the world is looking for.

The very fact that we have these is evidence that "it is the last time."

John follows the warning with a word of explanation. Note what it is.

## II. AN EXPLANATION (1 John 2:19).

Note where they have come from -- the infiltrating that Satan does.

Then see what they did. John states it as a complete and final departure.

But this is a contradiction of the truth of PERSEVERANCE. People who are truly born again do not go out! Therefore, there can be only one explanation in such a case: "they were not of us" -- they never were!

But the antichrists have been permitted in the providence of God for the purifying of the church during the present age. So that, while much damage has been done by the way Satan has sent his own among the people of God, God in the end has gotten the victory because it has been a means of exposing those who are not truly saved.

But there is still more that we need to know about the work of

these antichrists, and so John follows his explanation with

### III. AN ENCOURAGEMENT (1 John 2:20, 21).

Our hope for such a time as this is not in ourselves, but in the truth which we have learned.

We do not cast aside truth when we are presented with things that we have not heard before, but all things are to be examined in the light of the truth.

John is not saying that they know all that they can know, nor is he refraining because of their knowledge of the truth, but he writes to encourage them to stand firmly on what they have learned -- things that they have learned from the Holy Spirit Who has been their Teacher.

Not every congregation is like the one John was writing to, but this is what we need to aim at -- a thorough grounding of our people in the doctrines of Scripture!

But are there some truths that are more important than others? Is there any truth which is the most important?

We live in a day when truth is cast aside. What does John say?

### IV. THE MAIN ISSUE (1 John 2:22-26).

Since the false teachers are called "antichrists," then it should not be surprising to us that the target is CHRIST!

Check teachers on what they have to say about Christ --

- His place in the Word, as Christ.
- His relationship to the Father.
- His distinction from the Father.
- His place in salvation.

Note how John again in verse 24 encourages them to stand by what they have received and learned. There is no inconsistency about encouraging true believers to persevere any more than to preach to the elect that they must believe.

"Eternal life" is the issue, and there can be no eternal life with a true understanding of Christ.

### V. A SECOND ENCOURAGEMENT (1 John 2:27) -- not aimed at true teachers, but at the false who try to get people to believe that we cannot get along without them.

### VI. AN EXHORTATION (1 John 2:28, 29).

THE UNDOING OF SIN

1 John 3:4-10

Intro: John seems to have a special love for the word, manifest. You have some form of it in 1 John 2:28; 3:2 (2x), 5, 8, 10. Sometimes (unfortunately) it is translated in our KJV, appear, and sometimes, manifest -- but they are all from the same Greek root.

It means an appearance, but it means more than that. It means to appear in such a way that there is a revelation of something, a manifestation of something.

John has used this term to refer to the coming of the Lord. See it in 2:28 and again, the second usage in 3:2. At that time the Lord will not only come, but there will be such a manifestation of His glory that it will bring about the true manifestation of all who are His people. See 3:2. All creation waits for this. Cf. Rom. 8:18, 19.

While we do not know all that we would like to know about this manifestation of the sons of God, yet we do know two important things about it:

- 1) It will mean that we are like Christ, and, being like Christ,
- 2) It will mean that we are without sin!

This is the ultimately the goal of our salvation. Cf. Eph. 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:28-30.

But this is John's chief concern at this point in his Epistle: Since this is our ultimate destiny, we should realize that there should be evidence of that destiny even here and now! It is easy for us to rest in the fact that we are identified with the people of God in some way, or that we have some knowledge of the truth, or that we have had some kind of an experience which we explain as salvation, and yet not have the kind of evidence that John insists upon.

Therefore, he sounds a warning in the first part of v. 7: "Little children, let no man deceive you."

His point is this: All that God has done bears testimony to His hatred of sin. Therefore, if we are to purify ourselves (v. 3), we need to see what God has done for the undoing of sin!

I. GOD HAS EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN THREE MAIN WAYS TO BE AGAINST SIN.

A. By the Law (1 John 3:4).

This was His earliest, major revelation against sin.

But what did it do? Did it remove sin? No. Did it even

assist man in preventing sin? No. It actually aggravated the situation. But this is what we must realize: The Law was given that sin might be positively identified.

Cf. Rom. 3:19, 20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7.

So this gives us a basis upon which we can begin to define sin, as John does here in 1 John 3:4 -- the only time he mentions the Law in his three Epistles!

When God gave the Law He was exposing sin, and He was expressing Himself against all sin. Sin became then transgression.

- B. By the manifestation of His Son -- coupled with the purpose of that manifestation. See 1 John 3:5a.

He not only appeared, but He appeared as the Son of God. See v. 8. And He appeared for a specific purpose: "to take away our sins."

What could give greater proof of God's opposition to and hatred for all sin? And what could be greater proof of man's hopelessness to deal with sin apart from Christ?

But there is still a third reason, or expression, or God's hatred for sin.

- C. By the present condition of His Son: "in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5b).

Cf. the statements in Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.

He died because of our sins, but He has put them away. They are gone; they are not even to be found on Him. Cf. Heb. 9:26.

Consequently, if we are to become like our Lord, that likeness will consist mainly in sinlessness -- sinless perfection!

And so John reaches a very significant point.

- II. HIS DEDUCTION FROM WHAT HE HAS JUST SAID: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

What does John mean by abiding here? Contrast the two statements in chapter 2 -- verses 19 and 24 (where we have the word for abide three times). This is our doctrine of the



perseverance of the saints!

So, if a man truly knows the Lord he will abide, and, if he abides, he will not sin.

But is John saying that we get to the place where we no longer sin? If so, then there are no saints in the world. All we do is marked by sin. If we could not sin, then John would not have written the first chapter and the first two verses of chapter 2! We do sin. But a true child of God cannot live in known sin. It will bother him. The more mature he gets, the more he will become concerned about aspects of sin that he has never seen before -- e.g., his speech, and his time, etc.

And to this whole emphasis John adds a word of warning. See 1 John 3:7. And yet in spite of this the Church today is blinded on this point. Here it is stated positively in terms of the Law. See Rom. 8:3, 4. This is not any low system of human morality. This is the highest standard -- conformity to the divine standard of righteousness as it is set forth first in the Law, and then expanded upon throughout Scripture.

But John evidently feels that more needs to be said and so we have

— III. THREE FURTHER PROVISIONS THAT GOD HAS MADE FOR A HOLY LIFE  
(1 John 3:8, 9).

- A. Concerning the Devil -- and the effect of the work of Christ upon him (v. 8).
- B. Concerning "his seed" (v. 9a).

What does he mean by "his seed"? There have been many answers. See what you think about 1 Pet. 1:23 as an explanation. And link this with Psa. 119:11.

We are born again by the Word, and that Word becomes a permanent part of us! And this renders continuance in sin impossible.

This is closely related to that which follows and may be inseparable from it.

- C. Concerning being "born of God" -- i.e., having the very life of God in us. This is what makes us the children of God.

Concl: All of this leads to John's final word in this passage about the divine manifestations -- his conclusion. And this shows how God's children are presently manifested, and how sin is presently being undone!

## OUR DEBT OF LOVE

1 John 3:11-17

Intro: The Apostle John could be called the Apostle of Love, and this Epistle could be called the Epistle of Love. In chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 he mentions love. Chapter 1 is the only chapter in this Epistle where it is not mentioned. And we can also say that it has special emphasis in all of the four chapters where it is mentioned.

The aspect of love that he is most concerned about is the love that believers have for each other. We might call it brotherly love. There is nothing in the world that even comes close to it. But, as we have seen, John is concerned about the mixture that was already present in the professing church, and, consequently, the lack of love that there was. So he is calling attention to all that this is the dominant characteristic from which all of the other marks of a child of God seem to come. If love is lacking, all other traits of salvation will be lacking. Love is not all, but love will come first.

Cf. the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22, 23.

We had an example of brotherly love in Acts 9:17 when we observed what Ananias first said to Saul of Tarsus: "Brother Saul." It was also evident in what can be seen in Saul: "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus" (Acts 9:19). Prior to this these were the last people in the world that he would have wanted to be with, but now he is perfectly content to be with them!

This is a trait that is easily noticed, also, by the world. While we debate that shortest verse in Scripture, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35), and what it means, John tells us what it meant to the Jews who were there as the Lord went to Lazarus' grave. They said, "Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:36).

The Apostle Paul puts love above faith and hope. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:13. And he goes to greater lengths to describe love than he does any other characteristic of a child of God.

Paul also teaches that the full requirement of the Law with respect to men could be summed up in one commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. 5:14). And he was concerned for the Galatians that without this they would "bite and devour one another," and eventually be "consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15).

The background of one of our hymns illustrates this great aspect of Christian life and fellowship. (Read the account -- the first two paragraphs on p. 311 in The Story of our Hymns. Then read in our hymnal, Blest Be The Tie, #285.)

But it is amazing that John would say so much about a characteristic that has to be there is people really know the Lord. And yet this seems to be a part of his warning to those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the love that he speaks of is not evident, obviously there must be some who are not really saved.

Notice how strong his statements are in vv. 14b, 15.

So John exhorts us to love each other. And in this passage he even emphasizes it more by referring to it as a debt which needs to be paid. See the latter part of v. 16.

But how does he lead up to this point?

The whole passage seems to be built upon three verses: vv. 11, 14, and 16.

Notice the connection.

#### I. LOVE FULFILLS OUR DEBT TO THE WORD OF GOD (1 John 3:11-13).

By the connection with "Cain" in v. 12, it would seem that when John refers to "the beginning," he is speaking of the beginning of time.

"Cain" is the only person mentioned by name in 1 John except for the Members of the Godhead -- a most remarkable thing! "Cain" was religious, but he was not saved. He was thankful for God's blessings, but he was not repentant for his sins. The account in Genesis would indicate no trouble from Abel's standpoint, but it was Cain who hated Abel. Why? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It was really the Gospel which separated them -- and this led to Cain murdering Abel.

John puts Cain where he belongs -- in the world. See v. 13. And those who choose to approach God apart from the Gospel may appear to be religious, but their hatred over the truth shows that they are not saved.

Cf. even Paul before he was saved. See his former delights in Phil. 3. But he would kill Christians, ignoring the fact that love was the mark of a true believer -- and not anything else.

The whole context shows that this is not a weak kind of love that will accept anything as the truth, but the kind of love that holds firmly to the revelation of God concerning salvation.

So a lack of love is a contradiction of the Word of God. We

owe it to the Word to love each other. Otherwise people will get the wrong idea from our lives.

## II. LOVE GIVES US ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE REALLY SAVED (1 John 3: 14, 15).

This is our debt to the truth of salvation.

If it is absent, it is proof that we are not saved. There can be no real salvation without this love.

How the doctrine of salvation has been mangled and distorted in recent years! We will take almost any statement as proof that a person is saved. People who do not believe the Word, who do not believe in the substitutionary death of Christ, nor in His bodily resurrection, have taken the name Christian, and we will let them have it. We feel that love has to be inconsistent with the strong language that the Apostle John uses, and yet, if it were, he would not have used it! Let us insist on this the way John did. Nothing will make for greater health in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is one other point.

## III. OUR LOVE IS OUR DEBT TO THE LOVE OF GOD FOR US (1 John 3: 16, 17).

How do we perceive the love of God. "Perceive" is the word, know, which John uses some 40 times in this Epistle. How do we know that God loves us?

V. 16 gives us our answer.

See also Rom. 5:8. And remember John 3:16.

If a man does not love, he will hate, and, if he hates, he will murder. He may not actually take another person's life, but he will hate in other ways. Fortunately the Lord does not allow the hatred of men always to run its full course. But this passage certainly shows us what hatred will do if it does go to the full limit!

Love will die for another person rather than take that person's life. So that, by our willingness to lay down our lives "for the brethren" we demonstrate that that very love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts. See Rom. 5:5.

Note how it is demonstrated according to v. 17.

Concl: Much more could be said, and John says much more in this one Epistle. But it should help us to see that he deals with love, exhorting us to love each other, but showing also

that this is a debt of love which we owe to God because a lack of love distorts the idea that people have about:

- 1) The Word of God.
- 2) The truth of salvation.
- 3) The love of God itself.

And notice in the process what it means to us by John's use of the word "we" in all three of our main verses: vv. 11, 14, and 16.

For us to concentrate on loving each other is one sure way to bring the blessing of God!

## CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD

1 John 3:18-24

Intro: This is really the theme of 1 John: "Confidence toward God." Bound up in this expression is the idea of assurance of salvation. There have always been those who profess, but who do not possess. It had become a major problem in John's day; it has become a major problem in our day. And with the laxness in teaching, and the looseness of discipline, we have made it easier than ever for people to get into the church without manifesting the fact that they are saved.

I wish we could be as concerned about this as the Apostle John was -- first of all, for ourselves, and then for others. I can assure you that I am more concerned about this than I ever have been before. I would put this as the major problem of local churches today -- unregenerate members, or adherents.

Let me ask you tonight: Do you know that you are saved? If you answer in the affirmative, how do you know? Do you just look back to some time in your life when you made a profession of faith? Do you know the evidences of salvation; do you know what to look for as proof that you are saved?

Before we look at our text tonight, let us look at some other passages in which this subject is under consideration:

- 1) First, our Lord: Matt. 7:13-23. The problem was staggering in our Lord's day because it seems clear that most of the Pharisees were unregenerate! And, therefore, it is not surprising to see the spiritual blindness that existed among the people.
- 2) Note Paul's words in 2 Cor. 13:1-10, especially vv. 5-10.
- 3) Notice how Peter speaks of this in 2 Pet. 1:5-16. It was really because of this problem that Peter wrote his Epistles.
- 4) And what about James, the half-brother of our Lord. What about his words about the necessity of works to go along with faith? See Jas. 2:14-26.

And now, as one of the last books of the Bible to be written, we have an Epistle that is devoted to the subject. Obviously it would serve a twofold purpose:

- 1) To confirm true faith.
- 2) To expose false faith with the hope that there could be true faith in Christ.

Thus, a book like 1 John is one of the best books in the Bible from which to preach the Gospel!

John keeps coming back to this subject of love because it is a vital part of saving faith -- not because it precedes faith. This is illustrated by a passage like Eph. 1:15. Also Col. 1:4. It is brought out, too, in a verse above our text, 1 John 3:14. We do not pass from death unto life by loving the brethren, but

"we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." Faith comes first; love always accompanies faith. Cf. what we have seen in the life of Saul of Tarsus after he was saved. He was intent on getting in with the brethren.

Now, when you know this truth, there is always the danger that we pretend to possess what we do not have -- IF WE ARE NOT TRULY BORN AGAIN. We try to produce that love. We act the part. And that is what makes people hypocrites!

So in our text John issues

#### I. A WARNING (1 John 3:18-20).

Now even a true Christian can be hypocritical at times; we need to know that. And John is addressing all as believers when he says, "Little children." Believers need this as well as those who may not be true Christians. We can say that we love, and express it in other words, when there is no true loving "in deed and in truth."

John was well-acquainted with an example in the extreme: JUDAS. He did a perfect job of acting -- even to the kiss that he gave the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. See Matt. 26:49. And he had planned to identify the Lord with a kiss. The "holy kiss" was the common greeting of believers. See 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; Rom. 16:16. Judas even feigned his love for the Lord "in deed," but not "in truth."

So this must be present if a person is truly saved: love, love that is expressed for other saints, and the true expression of the heart.

And with this comes assurance. You don't love people because you like their looks, or because they can do something for you, but you love them because they belong to the family of God just like you do! See v. 19. When this is the case, the person who has such love also has assurance of salvation.

IF A PERSON DOES NOT HAVE THIS LOVE, HIS OWN HEART WILL CONDEMN HIM. And then notice what John says in verse 20! We may try to deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. If our own hearts witness to us that we do not have this love, then think of what God knows about us! Cf. Heb. 4:12, 13; Jer. 32:19.

So the Lord has given us a twofold warning, and two to warn us, that we may not be saved if love is lacking:

- 1) Our own hearts.
- 2) God, and His Word.

What is your own heart telling you tonight about yourself?

I know that a person can lack assurance because he is untaught, or because he is mis-taught. He can lack assurance because he is under Satanic assault. He can lack assurance for other reasons, but there can be no mistake about this: we either love the people of God from the heart, or we do not. If we do, we do because we have come to love God first!

That is John's warning. Let us not pass it over without some thought for ourselves, and also for those who are near and dear to us.

But there is another thing here.

## II. THE BEHAVIOR THAT ACCOMPANIES ASSURANCE (1 John 3:21, 22).

This is like the links of a chain, binding our hearts to the heart of God.

Let me ask you two questions tonight:

- 1) Have you ever stopped to ask yourself why we can get so many people out to church, but so few out to a prayer meeting? Do you know that there are many people who are in church every Sunday who have never been to a prayer meeting? Why is this? That is the first question.

The second is this:

- 2) Do you ever wonder why we who pray are so often content not to receive an answer to our prayers? It is as though there is special virtue in just praying!

But look at vv. 21, 22 in our text, and note the relationship they have to each other.

And then read 1 John 5:14, 15.

Both of these verse speak of answers -- getting what we ask for.

See also John 15:7; John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23, 24.

We have come to treat a praying man as a special kind of a Christian, when the Word of God indicates that, if you are a Christian, you will pray and you will receive what you pray for. It may not come immediately, but, if you ask according to His will, He will give it to you!

How was Ananias to recognize Saul of Tarsus when he went to look for him? The Lord said, "Behold, he prayeth"! (Acts 9:11).

Perhaps the Church's attitude toward prayer, and the Church's present-day experience in prayer, is a greater commentary on what is actually going on in the church today than we realize.

But there is one more thing in our text. It is this:



### III. THE ASSURANCE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS IN US (1 John 3:23, 24).

This is clearly taught in Scripture.

Our Lord taught it: John 14:16, 17.

Paul taught it in a number of places: 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 8:9.

And what is one very important thing that the Spirit of God, indwelling us, does? Cf. Rom. 8:16,

The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,  
that we are the children of God.

How does He do that?

One way is by the fruit which He bears in our hearts -- a part of which is "peace."

But notice what John says in the last two verses of our text -- and you have to read the statements of vv. 23, 24 in reverse order to get the point:

-- We know that the Holy Spirit is in us because we keep our Lord's commandments (not try to, but actually keep them). There is only one kind of a person who can keep the commandments of the Word of God, and that is a person who has the Holy Spirit, and the only kind of a person who has the Holy Spirit is a person who is truly saved.

-- The two commands that are especially evident are:

1) Loving one another -- the love of the saints for each other.

2) Faith in the name of God's "Son Jesus Christ."

None of these are present in any person's life, none are even possible to any EXCEPT THOSE WHO ARE REGENERATED AND INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Concl: Do you pass the test? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and do you believe on His Name? Do you believe that what He did for sinners is the only way to salvation and to heaven? Is your faith made evident by your love for the people of God, and for your joy in spending time with the Lord in prayer, either alone or with other Christians? Does your heart condemn you? If so, then God condemns you much more than you condemn yourself.

How about your children, parents? You have been happy to hear your children say that they are trusting the Lord, but do you see the evidence that John talks about? Do not deceive yourself into saying that it will come later. There are not one set of standards for adults, and another for children. And it behooves us to teach our children, and to pray for our children, and not to be satisfied until we see in them, too, the evidence that they have passed from death unto life!

## THE BASIC TEST OF FAITH

1 John 4:1-6

Intro: Here John is returning to the theme of 1 John 2:18-27.

Even in those early days of the Church, there were "many anti-christs," "many false prophets." And they posed a constant threat to the Church. Some were falling away; and, as today, many who were not in the Church preferred to leave the Church alone because of the many truths that they were not able to know which was right and which was wrong. In such a climate, it was imperative that the people of God know the situation, and be able to distinguish between truth and error.

Note how John contrast truth and error throughout this passage. All things fall into one of two categories: They are either true or false. There is a unity about truth; there is a diversity about error except on one point: "Jesus Christ." But more about this in a minute. Let us begin with the first verse by noticing

"OF GOD" "OF ANTICHRIST"  
"OF TRUTH" "OF ERROR"  
"OF THE WORLD"

## I. THE WARNING (1 John 4:1).

## A. The warning itself: "believe not every spirit."

"Spirit" is probably used here to refer to those who claimed to have the prophetic gift.

One of the first things that a child of God has to learn is that he can't believe everybody. Just because a person speaks of God, or just because they use the Word of God, is no reason for accepting what they have to say.

## B. The need: "But try the spirits whether they are of God."

Every believer needs to be able to conduct his own test -- to be able to reject what is not of God, and to accept what is of God. There is a way that we can know.

C. The reason for the warning and the test: "because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

It is not a simple problem; it is a major problem -- and it increases continually. It is not only a problem outside of the Church, but a problem inside! This makes it all the more dangerous.

## II. THE BASIC TEST (1 John 4:2, 3).

In our preceding passage John made a very important observation which we must go back to at this point. It has to do with the "unction" mentioned in v. 20, and "the anointing"

mentioned in v. 27. They are the same word in the Greek, and they refer to the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that John does not just say that you have the Word of God, go study it! Instead he points to the Holy Spirit.

This is one point on which the Reformers and the Puritans were very strong. The ministry of the Holy Spirit was a great and vital reality to them. Listen to what Calvin says on this point:

But it may be asked, whence have we this discernment? They who answer, that the word of God is the rule by which everything that men bring forward ought to be tried, say something, but not the whole. I grant that doctrines ought to be tested by God's word; but except the Spirit of wisdom be present, to have God's word in our hands will avail little or nothing, for its meaning will not appear to us; as, for instance, gold is tried by fire or touchstone, but it can only be done by those who understand the art; for neither the touchstone nor the fire can be of any use to the unskilful. That we may then be fit judges, we must necessarily be endowed with and directed by the Spirit of discernment (Calvin, XXII, 230).

Cf. Eph. 1:17 -- Paul's prayer.

Thus, we need the Word of God, but we also need the Spirit of God. We do not find our own way to the truth; He guides us!

But what is the test?

It has to do with "Jesus Christ" -- and to make it as strong as possible, John states it first positively in v. 2, and then negatively in v. 3.

Again, quoting Calvin,  
as Christ is the object at which faith aims, so he is the stone at which all heretics stumble (XXII, 232).

What is involved in the statement, "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"? Many things. It is full of great teaching. Note the following:

- 1) Since He "came," it speaks of His pre-existence and of His Deity.
- 2) Since He is "Christ," it not only speaks of His Deity but of the central place which He occupies in the Old Testament Scriptures. He is the long-awaited Messiah!
- 3) He came "in the flesh." Consequently we are dealing with a true, a real, human being.
- 4) But since He continues to be what He always has been, we have not only true humanity, but perfect humanity. The incarnation produced no change in His Deity.

- 5) And then there must have been a reason for His coming. This is a key point. See vv. 9, 10, and 14 below in this chapter.

These are the truths that the Spirit of God declares concerning "Jesus Christ." Anything else is error; anything less is error, too! Ask the Holy Spirit to make you see that these truths of Scripture are really as important as they actually are! Put this test to every teaching and to all teaching.

Now, this being true, why is false doctrine so successful, and what eventually will be the outcome?

To deal with these questions, John gives us the following

### III. THREE ENCOURAGEMENTS (1 John 4:4-6).

- A. Ultimate victory is certain for those who are "of God" (v. 4).
- B. False teachers get their response from those who are "of the world" -- an entirely different class of people from those who are "of God" (v. 5).

The different way in which people respond to the teaching of the Word of God concerning Christ is an indication as to whether or not they are elect, or non-elect; sheep, or goats; of the world, or of God.

Thus, we are not to expect the world to be turned to God.

Cf. what the Lord said about His own in John 17:16 -- "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" -- two classes, those who are, and those who are not!

- C. There will be those who will hear us (v. 6).

Concl: And then John concludes with these words: "Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" -- meaning all of these things taken into consideration. It is even illuminating for us when some reject the truth.

Thus we need to be concerned about:

- 1) The work of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) What the Word of God teaches us about Christ.

To get away from these is to get lost in the hopeless maze of false teaching that is specifically designed by Satan to turn us and all other men away from Christ, and to doom us eternally in darkness.

## GOD AND HIS LOVE

1 John 4:7-16

Intro: In verses 1-6 we have the child of God in his conflict with the world and with the spirit of antichrist which pervades the world. Christ is the One Who is the issue between the believer and the world of unbelievers.

In this passage (vv. 7-16) the emphasis turns again to the family of God, and to the relationship that the family members have toward each other.

And so John wrote: "Beloved, let us love one another."

We find our refuge on earth from the world by the fellowship of love that is ours in the family of God. There is nothing like it throughout the world. There is no true love except the love of God -- and we need to understand this in order to understand what John has written.

Notice how he develops his message:

- 1) We must love because we have no other alternative (vv. 7, 8).
- 2) Love described (vv. 9-11). It cannot be concealed.
- 3) The meaning of love (vv. 12-16), that is, what we can know to be true because we love each other as God has loved us.

### I. THE NECESSITY OF LOVE (1 John 4:7, 8).

John commands that which we must, without exception, do. We have no other choice. It is a part of knowing God that we will love others who know Him with the same love that He has manifested toward us. If we know God, we might just as well try to stop existing as to try to stop loving.

The world knows nothing about this kind of love. It does not even exist in the hearts of unregenerate men. And so, whenever you find this love, you know that you have found a true child of God.

Note the "of God" in v. 7 as we did in vv. 1-6 last week.

### II. THE DESCRIPTION OF LOVE (1 John 4:9-11).

In the world's hatred of God and of Christ, we are sure to have someone tell us that the people of God have no corner on love. But the Word of God says that we do -- but we need to make clear that we are talking about the love of God. It is "the love of God" that "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5) -- and we do not have that love until we receive it from the Spirit of God.

What are its characteristics?

You have them in vv. 9, 10.

- A. It is a love that cannot be concealed: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us."
- B. It is a distinguishing love: "Toward us."

Note "we" in the latter part of verse 9, and "we" and "us" and "our" in verse 10. Also "us" in verse 11. Apart from this meaning, verse 11 does not make any sense. Cf. John 13:1.

- C. It is a love that will sacrifice to the greatest degree: "Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world."

God not only loved us, but He expressed that love, not with the gifts that He gives to all men, but by the gift of His Son, "his only begotten Son," and by sending His precious, beloved Son "into the world." He came into a world that hated Him to save a people whom He loved!

- D. It is a life-giving love, a resurrecting love: "That we might live through him."

Those whom Christ came to save are never the same after they come to know Him.

- E. It is a gracious love (v. 10).

We did not love Him first; we did not love Him at all. Paul tells us that we were His enemies, but He has loved us eternally anyway! So His love was exercised without any merit of any kind on our part -- a purely gracious love!

- F. It is an effective love: "And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The righteousness of God has been completely satisfied with the work of His Son. Because of the strength of this word, we only have two alternatives:

- 1) Either everybody will be saved, or
- 2) The death of Christ was for a specific group of people, chosen by Him in infinite grace, and redeemed through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It cannot mean that people will go to hell if God has been propitiated for their sins!

But how does this apply to the love of God in us for our brethren?

It means that our objective in showing love is for the

spiritual blessing and edification of our fellow-believers.

This is where all of us have failed. We enjoy being with each other, but we so often lose sight of our purpose. We need to be ministering to each other. People should never leave us, if we can possibly avoid it, without being blessed of God through us.

Do you pray about this as you begin your day? Do you think about this even as far as your family is concerned?

And so John comes down to verse 11. If this is what we have received, "we ought," we have a divine obligation, "to love one another.

But this is not all! John goes on to speak of

### III. THE MEANING OF LOVE (1 John 4:12-16).

Remember that John is concerned about our assurance that we we are saved.

He picks up an expression which he used in his Gospel: "No man hath seen God at any time." Cf. John 1:18. There it has to do with the revelation of God in Christ, but here it has to do with the revelation of God in us.

This latter revelation serves a twofold purpose:

- 1) It assures us of our salvation.
- 2) It gives the world a revelation of God in us -- not anything like the revelation that was given in Christ, but the same kind of a revelation, only to a lesser degree.

Notice how John develops the meaning of God's love in us:

- 1) It means that God is in us. What an amazing truth! Who can fully comprehend what this means?
- 2) Not only that, but it means that "his love is perfected in us."

This was the reason for the coming of Christ -- that God might dwell in us, and manifest Himself through us! Only God could do such a thing. This is the purpose of our salvation.

But even this is not all:

- 3) If God is in us, it also means that the Holy Spirit is in us "because he hath given us of his Spirit." The Spirit was promised to all true believers, and so we can count on this, too.

But this is still not all:

- 4) Our confession of Jesus Christ as "the Son of God" (v. 15), and our acknowledgment of the purpose of His coming, as in v. 14, both serve to prove that God is in us.

"The world" cannot mean every person without exception because that is not what is taking place, but it means for Jews and Gentiles alike -- people throughout the whole world!

Therefore, tracing all of this back in reverse order we have:

- 1) Faith in Christ.
- 2) The indwelling of the Spirit.
- 3) The indwelling of God Himself.
- 4) The manifestation of His love as proof that the three foregoing realities are true of us!

Concl: Could anything be more wonderful than that which we have here? Surely the Epistle of 1 John is hard for us because there are few who live on the level of spiritual life that John is writing about. We have these blessings, but we do live in the enjoyment of them as we should.

And note, if you will, the high plane of our fellowship together in Christ -- what it actually is, and what it should mean to all of us, as well as to the world. Our faith must be right. Doctrine cannot be corrupted. But our faith must be demonstrated by the love of God in us.

Cf. Eph. 4:15, 16 -- our memory verses for this month, as an illustration of our text tonight.



## PERFECT LOVE AND VICTORIOUS FAITH

1 John 4:17-5:5

Intro: Look closely at both of these terms, PERFECT LOVE, and VICTORIOUS FAITH -- and then ask the Lord to make you understand that both of these are yours because you are His.

The first one is mentioned in 1 John 4:17.

The second one is mentioned in 1 John 5:4.

Both of them have to do with triumphant living. The context shows that they have to do with the future judgment,  
with things that cause present fears,  
with present relationships with  
other believers,  
with the Word of God, and  
with the world.

It is hard to think of anything that is omitted in all of these.

Our problem is that we do not know what makes our love perfect, nor what gives our faith the victory.

Let us make sure that we understand the meaning of these two terms.

### I. THE MEANING OF OUR SUBJECT.

I can speak of these as one subject because they go together. John makes no attempt to separate them. Instead he clearly indicates that they are inseparable, and that they belong to every child of God. You will find them manifested to different degrees among the children of God, but that they belong together and are a part of the heritage of the Lord's people, cannot be doubted from what the Apostle John teaches us in this passage.

#### A. Perfect Love.

For us this can never mean a love without any flaws, but it means a growing, mature, sufficient love -- a love that we find adequate for all that we face now, or will ever face! It is a love that is complete; we need nothing in addition to it.

#### B. Victorious Faith.

This clearly indicates that our victory is not in ourselves, because our faith is not in ourselves, nor does it originate with us. It, too, is growing, but it is always victorious. God's people are never defeated IF they know the secret of victory -- and this is what John

is teaching us in this passage.

But let us go a step farther. Let us look at PERFECT LOVE first.

## II. HOW IS OUR LOVE PERFECTED?

Keep our definition in mind.

To answer this question we have to notice that verse 17 begins with the word, "Herein." It also means, "By this," or lit., in this.

We should respond by saying, "Where?" Or, "In what?"

The most logical place to look is in the verse immediately preceding verse 17. Does v. 16 help us?

It most certainly does. We had it last week, but look again at what it says. Two things apply:

- 1) The first is that he is not talking about our love for God, or our love for our fellow-believers, BUT ABOUT GOD'S LOVE FOR US.
- 2) The second consists of two parts -- one is that this God Who loves us is dwelling in us, and He is, secondly, a God of love.

Thus, to have PERFECTED LOVE we must believe, dwell on, and learn more and more about God's love for us.

This surely indicates that there is a special love that the Lord has for His own. His love is a distinguishing love, not because of anything in us, but because of His sovereign will.

Thus, we need to take our Bibles and make this a special object of study -- the amazing love of God for His people.

But now let us look at the other term: VICTORIOUS FAITH.

## III. HOW DOES OUR FAITH BECOME VICTORIOUS?

By the way I should mention that John speaks of both our LOVE and our FAITH in a most encouraging way. He says that our love has been perfected, and that our faith is already victorious. Both have to do with God and so they cannot be any other kind than as John describes them.

But back to FAITH . . .

John describes what he means by FAITH two times in this passage: once at the beginning of verse 1;  
the other at the end of verse 5.

Read them.

FAITH is VICTORIOUS when it is centered in "JESUS" -- the Name which John uses in both verses: 1 and 5.

But in one case he refers to our Lord as "Christ"; in the other, as "the Son of God"!

To understand either or both of these titles (along with the name "Jesus") we must know more and more about:

- 1) Who He is.
  - 2) What He has done.
  - 3) What we have in Him.
  - 4) What His purposes are.
- And so on.

Just as for the perfecting of our love, we must meditate on the love of God, so for the perfect of our faith we must meditate on "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2).

This will take us into all of the Word. It will strengthen our faith for every situation.

But, returning to our text, let us notice finally some of

#### IV. THE FRUITS, THE REWARDS, THE BLESSINGS OF PERFECT LOVE AND VICTORIOUS FAITH.

- A. It will deliver us from the fear of judgment (1 John 4:17).

It does not make us indifferent. In fact, it will make us more concerned. Fear will be gone. Our motive will be to serve Him more faithfully that we may glorify Him more completely.

- B. It will deliver us from fear in this life (1 John 4:18).

How many Christians are there who go through life dreading what might happen, or by becoming panicky when things go wrong just because they are not "made perfect in love."

The way to test yourself is by noticing how much you think about God, and about His love.

- C. It will give you peace about your relationship to God (1 John 4:19).

"Him" is not in the Greek text, but it certainly is understood to be the first Object of our love. You and I cannot think about His love and all that He has provided for us because of His love, without loving Him more!

- D. It will cause us to love our brethren as we should (1 John 4:20, 21; 5:1b).

If I love God, then I will also love others in whom God dwells -- and this I am commanded to do. And so are you!

- E. It will change our attitude toward the Word of God (1 John 5:2, 3).

How many there are who chafe under the commandments of Scripture! They complain that they are too hard, that they take the joy out of life.

The person who feels that the Lord's commandments are "grievous" is the person who knows little about God and perhaps even less about His Son, Jesus Christ. Have they given their Word to make us miserable, or to set us free?

- F. It will make us realize that we are not the victims of "the world," but that God has provided for our victory through faith (in Jesus Christ) in every situation. Cf. 1 John 5:4, 5.

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ . . ."

Concl: Can you see what you need to be doing? Can you see all of the assurance, the joy, the peace, the victory, that can be yours -- that is yours?

We must get back to Theology -- to the doctrine of God, to the doctrine of Christ -- and, I might add, to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Daniel tells us that "the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Dan. 11:32b).

Is it any wonder that Paul in prison wrote, "That I may know HIM . . ."?

How well do you know God -- in doctrine, and in practice? Do you ever doubt His love? Do you ever question His ability to meet your need, or His wisdom in dealing with you as He does? If you want PERFECT LOVE and VICTORIOUS FAITH in a fuller and fuller measure, then make it your business every day, in every circumstances, in the Word and in prayer, to know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom" He "hast sent" (John 17:3).

How fitting it is that tonight we should be observing the Lord's Supper which was given to us by our Lord to help us to keep our thoughts on Him!

THE WITNESS OF GOD

1 John 5:6-12

Intro: One of the amazing things about man is the way in which he will receive testimony from other men, but reject the testimony of God.

Thomas is a good illustration of this. He rejected the testimony of Christ even when it was confirmed by the other Apostles.

John touches on this in verse 9 of our text. Our willingness to believe men, and sometimes to stake our lives on what they say, should mean that we would be more prone to believe God. But such is not the case. We expect God to come up with all kinds of proofs of what He says, or we will not believe.

This is the issue that John is concerned with in the passage before us.

In verse 1, and again in verse 6, John has said that no one can claim to be a child of God who does not believe "that Jesus is the Christ." In verse 6 he indicates that truth faith is only that which believes "that Jesus is the Son of God."

Thus, he narrows salvation down to believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what right does John have to do this? His answer is that this is in full accord with the testimony of God, the witness of God.

But before he gets to that witness in detail, he shows the confirmation that was given to Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry. Note the expression, "came by," in verse 6. This can only refer to His first coming into the world.

Let us look at this for a moment.

I. THE THREEFOLD WITNESS TO CHRIST WHILE HE WAS HERE ON EARTH (1 John 5:6-8).

First, note the textual problem. We need to omit all of the words from "in heaven" in verse 7 through "in earth" in verse 8, as there is no real textual support for them. So verses 7 and 8 should read,

For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

So we are talking about a threefold witness that was given to Christ by God while He was here on earth -- a threefold witness that He was "the Christ," that He was "the Son of God."

We have no trouble with "the Spirit." This is the Holy Spirit. We can think of all of the ways in which the Holy Spirit was related to Christ during His life on earth (His birth, His baptism, His temptation, His miracles, His resurrection, and even in the ministry of the early Church). No human being ever had the relationship to the Holy Spirit, or the testimony from the Holy Spirit, that Christ has!

In the same way there has been little trouble about the "blood"! This is usually taken to point to His death on the Cross -- and the testimony that this was to Christ.

BUT THE PROBLEM HAS TO DO WITH "THE WATER"!

Here are some of the ideas:

- 1) John 19:34.
- 2) His birth.
- 3) His baptism.
- 4) The Word of God -- linking it to John 3:5 and Eph. 5:26.
- 5) The two sacraments.
- 6) The Levitical offerings -- Calvin's view.

And there have been many others.

Which is the right one?

This is probably a place where it is best to say that "we think that such a view is right," because it may be impossible for us to know beyond any doubt.

(Review 1), 2), 5), and 6) above.)

To me the strongest views are 3) and 4).

But we really do not need 4) because we have the Spirit, and any testimony of the Spirit has to include the Word.

Therefore, I am inclined to think of the testimony that God gave at our Lord's baptism, and the significance of that baptism.

Please turn to Matt. 3:13-17. Also see John 1:29-34.

So this is what we need -- a threefold witness, all agreeing as they do, is that which is fully established. Cf. Deut. 19:15; quoted in Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1.

## II. THREE FACTS TO BE RECOGNIZED ABOUT GOD'S WITNESS (1 John 5:9, 10).

One has to do with accepting the witness. The second has to do with the confirmation of that witness after it is accepted. The third has to do with the rejection of the witness. Note each one.

- A. If we accept man's witness, surely we should be able to accept God's. See v. 9.
- B. If we accept God's witness, we will have that testimony confirmed. See v. 10a.

John is probably referring to what Paul wrote in Rom. 8:16.

- C. If we reject God's witness concerning Christ, then we are saying that God is "a liar."

This is always the case when the Word of God is rejected. See 1 John 1:10.

John sees nothing inconsistent with bringing a person to faith in Christ, nor in establishing them in that faith, with using such arguments as we have above.

But this brings us to

### III. THE DETAILS OF THE WITNESS (1 John 5:11, 12).

John is talking about God's witness concerning His Son as it relates to salvation. So that some of the witness has to do with what we are as well as what He is. But notice the significance of every part of these two important verses.

- A. Its authority: "And this is the record," i.e., the witness, the testimony, OF GOD.

Do not treat this like a man's testimony (even though you might accept it from a man). This is something infinitely greater! It is THE TESTIMONY OF GOD HIMSELF.

- B. Its origin: GOD.

Look through Scripture, and look at human history. Look at the human heart. You will not find the slightest bit of evidence that man wanted to be saved. It all started with GOD!

- C. Its nature: "God hath given . . ."

Man doesn't want it. He doesn't deserve it. He could never earn it. Therefore, if he is to be saved, it can only be as a gift from God!

Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

- D. Its object: "us."

- E. Its durability: "eternal life."

It is not something here today, but gone tomorrow! It is "eternal life," God's life.

Finally (and this is the main point):

F. The channel of this life: CHRIST. "This life is in His Son."

And then, lest there be any doubt in anyone's mind as to what he means, he writes out the words that we have in verse 12!

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

Two questions:

- 1) What about the good man who does not receive Christ?
- 2) What about the person who has never heard?

The answer for both is 1 John 5:11, 12.

Concl: Just a word of application for all of us:

- 1) For the one who is a Christian. Never be ashamed of the witness of God, and never let anyone move you away from it. It stands forever true; it cannot be changed.
- 2) For the one who is not a Christian. You have wanted to know what is the right way, what is the truth. You can have no higher authority than God. This is God's testimony, confirmed by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood -- a testimony that is sure and changeless! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is absolutely no hope apart from Christ.



DO YOU KNOW?  
1 John 5:13-21

Intro: We come to the end of this great Epistle. It has been an Epistle which resounds with the certainty of our faith! Eternal life is not something that is difficult to detect, but it has some very obvious and necessary characteristics. John has covered most of these more than once.

As he comes to the close he tells us in chapter 5, verse 13, those to whom he has written, and why! Then he proceeds to make a series of affirmations concerning his faith, and concerning the faith of all true believers, and we must deal with them if we are to deal with this passage. They are things which a true child of God knows. There may be variations among those who believe as to the extent to which they are known, but they will be known.

John is obviously addressing that which is a present-day problem -- and a problem that he faced in his day. It is the problem of unregenerate church members. They are people who are in the church; they know something about doctrine, and they outwardly are able to do what Christians are supposed to do -- but it is all outward. They have never been saved. They do not possess eternal life.

We need to be able to distinguish between one who is not saved and one who is immature in the faith. But the difference is that the one who is immature will have the true evidences of eternal life, even though they may be weak. One who professes only without possessing will not really have them at all! They may even seem to be unimportant to him.

Tonight I want to look at the things that John say "we know," but to consider them as questions. And so I want to say, "DO YOU KNOW?" If you do, you will not be offended with the questions, and the fact that you can say, "we know," with the Apostle John, will make you rejoice. If you do not know, then there is no time like the present to make sure that you come to know these things through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let me ask the questions -- 5 of them.

I. DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

The NASB reads like this:  
THESE THINGS HAVE I WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE  
NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW  
THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

Assurance has to be taught. It does not depend primarily upon experience, but upon the truth -- the things which John

has written.

Thus, our assurance comes from the Word. The more we know of the Word, the greater will be our assurance. When we see the things in our lives that the Word says should be there, then we will be assured.

Note that assurance brings us to the realization that salvation is a present possession -- not something that we will get at some future time.

And, it is beyond the possibility that we have eternal life if we have any doubts about that which is involved in believing "in the name of the Son of God." The issue is Christ -- Who He is, and what He has done for the salvation of sinners.

## II. DO YOU KNOW THAT YOUR PRAYERS ARE HEARD? Cf. vv. 14, 15.

How do you know that your prayers are heard? Two ways:

- 1) They are according to the will of God.
- 2) They are answered -- and these are the only kind of prayers that are answered.

There is a lot of fuzzy thinking even today about prayer. If things work out a certain way, we are inclined to say that God answered our prayers -- if the result happens to be what we want, or what we thought was going to happen.

This is where we need the Word again. There is no other way to know the will of God. An acquaintance with the Word of God will change the very character of our prayers. Why do you think we have the Psalms if it is not to teach us to pray? Look at the prayer the Lord taught His disciples. Study the Lord's prayer in John 17, and the prayers that are recorded in the NT Epistles.

Do you delight in that kind of praying?

John is telling us that a true child of God will pray, but he is also telling us that a true child of God will delight in the right kind of prayer! Perhaps the reason vv. 14 and 15 follow verse 13 is because this is the first evidence that we need to look for in our own hearts.

But I must hurry on to the third question.

## III. DO YOU KNOW THAT A CHRISTIAN CANNOT CONTINUE IN SIN?

See vv. 16-18. This occupies more space than any of the other points, probably because there were more problems in this area.

Note verse 18. A true child of God will not continue living

in sin. A person who does has not been saved. It is obvious that a child of God can sin, but living in sin is another matter.

In fact, according to verse 18, instead of living in sin, he will be keeping himself, i.e., he will be manifesting a new awareness of its dangers, and will avoid anything that could possibly lead him in that direction! And (still in v. 18), when he does, the Devil is powerless to touch him.

Now let us go back to v. 16.

A true Christian will not only be concerned about his own sin, but he will also be concerned about the sins of his brothers and sisters in the family of God -- not for gossip, nor for criticism, but for prayer!

It is possible for a child of God to sin unto death, i.e., physical death. Moses did! Uzziah did! We cannot say what that might be because it differs in different cases. Remember what we read just before the Lord's Supper this morning: " . . . for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep."

But not all sin in Christians is like this -- but we need to be praying for each other that God would deliver us from sin, and even from temptation.

And the last thing that a Christian knows about sin (according to this passage) is what sin is. See v. 17. Again we are brought back to the Word because righteousness is anything that deviates from the will of God.

#### Question #4:

#### IV. DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHILD OF GOD AND ONE WHO BELONGS TO THE WORLD?

Again, the answer has to do with the things of God, on the one hand, and the things of the world and the Devil on the other.

"The whole world" is not only held in the grip of the Evil One, but it is content to stay there. Oh, there may be times when a sinner hates his sin, but he usually hates it because of its consequences, not because it is what it is. How different this is from the idea expressed in v. 18 with reference to a true believer.

Think of what it means that we are "of God." Review what John has written about this. See, e.g., 4:1, 2, 4, 6, etc.

#### V. DO YOU KNOW WHY THE SON OF GOD CAME?

Perhaps it would be even better to back up and ask, DO YOU KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD HAS COME -- AND WHY?

Illus: Richard Baxter's, The Reformed Pastor -- and what he has written about how little he found that his people knew after they had been under his ministry for ten or twelve years. There were simple questions about Jesus Christ that they could not answer. What about you?

Do you know how He came? Do you know why He came? John does not say anything about sin in this 20th verse. Do you know where your understanding has come from -- why it is that you know spiritual truth which others do not know? Look at the verse and you will see that God has given this to you. Do you know what your relationship is to Jesus Christ now? You "are (present tense) in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." How do you react to that? Does it interest you? Does it amaze you, and excite you? Does it make any sense to you at all?

This is what it means to be a Christian -- and a true child of God may not know all that he needs to know about it, but he is interested, and he knows that it is so, and he wants to learn more about it.

And this is why the Epistle ends with the warning that we find here: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

This is like v. 18, isn't it? We keep ourselves, not as an act of our "free will," but by the grace of God and because of our relationship to Jesus Christ!

So I must shun all that would draw me away from the deepest kind of love for my heavenly Father, or from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: Doesn't this cause you to see that being a Christian is a lot more than going to church, or learning something about what good churches believe, or behaving in a certain way? Being a Christian means that you have faith in Jesus Christ. It means that you possess eternal life. It means that you have been delivered from the power of sin and of the world and of the Evil One. It means that you have been given understanding by God Himself, that you know Him, and you know His Son, and that you have the Son of God dwelling in you.

Nothing less than all of this will serve as an adequate description of a true child of God. DO YOU KNOW?

## A LETTER TO AN ELECT LADY

2 John

Intro: There are 5 one-chapter books in the Bible -- 4 are in the NT. They are Obadiah, Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.

Four of them bear the names of the writers; one (Philemon) of the one who received the letter.

Only one was written especially to a woman -- that is 2 John. Although some have wondered if it should be in the Bible, yet there has been no real doubt as to the writer, the Apostle John, and there has been great support for it as a letter inspired of God.

It is interesting to compare 2 John and 3 John because they really are the counterpart of each other -- but we will look more at that next week.

As far as we know, all of John's writing was done late in the first century when he must have been the only surviving Apostle. In this and in 3 John he shows his pastoral heart, his great concern for even one believer.

In the case of this lady, there were many things that John wanted to talk to her about, but evidently he felt an urgency about the matter which he takes up in this letter, and so could not wait until he was able to visit her. This should make us realize how tremendously important the matter was (as we will see in a moment). It would be interesting to know what the other subjects were.

Instead of taking the Epistle verse by verse, I would rather, for this time, deal with the themes. And so let us consider first of all,

### I. THE LADY HERSELF.

- A. She must have been a widow because no mention is made of her husband.

If her husband had been living, it would have been more proper for John to address the word about entertaining teachers in her home to her husband.

- B. She had a wonderful family.

This letter is addressed to her children as well as to her, but somewhere John had had a recent contact with her family, as v. 4 indicates.

- C. She was greatly beloved. See v. 1b.

1. The Apostle John loved her "in the truth."
2. All of those who knew the truth, and knew her, loved her.

Be sure that you note John's description of a child of God -- he is one who, lit., has known the truth and continues to know it.

Thus, as we get into the letter we see a strong emphasis on "the truth."

- D. She was a lady "given to hospitality," as Paul wrote in Romans 12:13.

Her home was open to the Apostle John, and to other teachers of the Word as they came her way. That is the reason for John's letter to her.

This is a ministry that all of us can have with the Lord's people. It gives us an opportunity to be a blessing to them, and to receive blessing from them. Cf. Heb. 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain . . ."

More undoubtedly could be said even from this Epistle, but let me conclude my remarks about this lady by stating why all of the above things can be said.

- E. She was "the elect lady." See v. 1.

Not only that, but she had an "elect sister"!

What did this mean? How unusual it was for a letter to be addressed this way (at least in Scripture -- although Peter does it in 1 Peter 1:2, and Paul does it in Col. 3:12).

1. It meant that she was saved -- really saved.
2. It meant that there was indisputable evidence in her life that she was saved: holiness!
3. It meant that she could not take the credit for her salvation -- she was chosen of God.
4. It meant that her salvation had been determined "before the foundation of the world."

To be sure there was a time in her life when she heard the Gospel, and when she believed, but that was all the outworking of God's plan from eternity past. See 2 Tim. 1:8, 9.

I want you to have that background, to see that we are dealing with an outstanding Christian lady, one who was persevering in the faith, whose house was in order, and who was greatly beloved by other saints.

- But it was to such a lady as this that Paul had the following things to say:

## II. THE MESSAGE OF JOHN TO THE ELECT LADY.

### A. Words of encouragement.

1. Concerning herself.
2. Concerning her family.

We need to be more concerned with encouraging each other and to do it as John did in verse 4, for example.

- ### B. His prayer for her (v. 3). Note the 5 great words that he uses here.

John would not just say this as a matter of greeting, but because this was his concern for her, and these were her great needs.

— Note what they are, and where they come from.

### C. His exhortation.

Amazingly, he writes about the thing that she was doing the best -- her love for the saints.

But this is the point (in v. 6): We will not continue to love if we neglect obedience to the Word, or, as he refers to the Word here -- "that we walk after his commandments."

This was particularly important because of what he was about to say. It is obedience to the truth which is the foundation of our love for each other, and this is what makes us sensitive to "the truth." And so, note

### D. His warning.

This is obviously the purpose of his letter. She needed to love even more than she did (although she probably loved more than others did), but her love toward others had to be within the limits of the truth!

Read verses 7-11.

What was the acid test for all teachers? It was not

just that they must speak of Jesus Christ, but special attention needed to be given to what they said about Him. A person may have a lot of complimentary things to say about Jesus. There may not be any doubt but that He was a true historical person. BUT DO THEY SAY THAT HE WAS "JESUS CHRIST" (with all that that means), AND DO THEY SAY THAT HE "IS COME IN THE FLESH"? Do they believe that He is "THE SON" -- with all that that means? Do they teach His eternal character, His likeness to the Father, that He continued to be the Son of God when He was in the flesh, that He is the One predicted throughout the OT, and that He came to provide salvation for sinners? Is that what they are saying about Him?

If not, they are deceivers,  
                   they are not for Christ, they are antichrist.  
 They are not satisfied to stick by what the Word of God has to say about Christ, they transgress, they go beyond because Christ is not enough.

Thank God that in John's old age he did not weaken on this point. And it is encouraging to see that he felt that this was such a vital issue that he could not wait until he saw this elect lady; he had to write to her about it.

If any did not pass this test, she would be sinning to bring them into her home, and she would be partaking of their sin if she sought their blessing in any way. See vv. 10, 11.

Concl: What must we conclude beyond what we have said? Let me say two more things.

First, this may be an indication of a special weakness with elect ladies. (I am going to be speaking to the men next week.) Eve was deceived. See 2 Cor. 11:3. The Lord has placed the leadership of His work in the hands of men. Women are to learn from their husbands at home. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:35. This lady evidently had no husband, and so John writes to her as "the elder" (v. 1). (And, by the way, he wrote to Gaius in 3 John in the same way.) So John is exercising his office as an overseer of the flock. Ladies, beware that your hearts do not get in the way of your heads!

Second, this letter teaches all of us that it is extremely important to love one another. John does not discourage this in the elect lady; he actually encourages her to love more than she has been. But he gives her this solemn warning: LOVE IS NOT AN AFFECTION THAT IS TO BE SHOWN INDEPENDENTLY OF THE TRUTH. LOVE MUST BE CONFINED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE TRUTH -- AND THOSE LIMITS ARE DETERMINED BY JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!



John would have no patience with the present-day trend on love as though that were the only thing in Scripture. Love is important, extremely important, but the truth of Scripture must be given the greatest place of all!

This is the principle: We are to deal with the unbeliever on the basis of the truth, not love. We are to love believers, but only within the limits of the truth.

May God keep us faithful to Jesus Christ and to the truth of the Word of God!