

# The First Epistle of John

## Introduction

This Epistle is not addressed to any one church nor does it mention, like the other New Testament Epistles, the author of the document; it is anonymous. We are not left in doubt who penned this Epistle in spite of its anonymous character. There can be no question that the author of the fourth Gospel is also the author of this Epistle. Its opening statement is linked with the opening of the Gospel and throughout it is written in the thought and language of the fourth Gospel. Inasmuch, then, as that Gospel is indisputably the work of John the Apostle, this Epistle is also the work of his inspired pen. "The internal testimony furnished by this Epistle to its author being the same with the author of the fourth Gospel is, it may well be thought, incontrovertible. To maintain a diversity of authorship would betray the very perverseness and exaggeration of that school of criticism which refuses to believe, be evidence never so strong" (Alford).

## Historical Evidence

While the internal testimony confirms conclusively the Johannine authorship of the Epistle there is also a mass of historical evidence which attributes the Epistle to the beloved disciple. The oldest testimony is that of Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John. We refer to the introduction of the Gospel of John where we give fuller information on Polycarp and his testimony to the fourth Gospel. He makes, in one of his writings, a direct reference to 1 John 4:3, in fact, he quotes this verse almost verbatim. It is, therefore, a testimony to the genuineness and the authorship of this Epistle. Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, frequently quotes the Epistle of John and states that it is John's. Notable is the reference in his work against heresies as quoted by Eusebius. He cites John 20:31 and connects it with 1 John 2:18 and 4:1-3 and 1 John 5:1. After these two witnesses, Polycarp, who knew John, and Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, every authority among the church fathers mentions this Epistle as being the work of John the Apostle.

It is not necessary to quote all these references--by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Jerome, and many others. We mention but one more of the ancient testimonies, that which is found in the Muratorian fragment. This old and very reliable source of the second century has in it the following paragraph: "What wonder is it, then, that John brings forward each detail with so much emphasis, even in this Epistle, saying of himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written to you. For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but a hearer, and, moreover, a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord in order.

In harmony with this evidence is the testimony of the oldest fourth century Greek manuscripts, which give the title of the Epistle as "Joannou-A"--that is--"John 1." Its rejection by the gnostic Marcion is of no importance, for he excluded from the Scriptures all the writings of the Apostle because they deal a death-blow to his anti-Christian inventions. Lucke, one of the great scholars of bygone days, states that the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John are the genuine works of the apostle, and he adds, "Incontestably, then, our Epistle must be numbered among those canonical books which are most strongly upheld by ecclesiastical tradition."

It is, therefore, not necessary in face of such internal and external evidences to state the objections of destructive critics like Scaliger, S.G. Lange, Bretschneider and the Tübingen school. As it is with other portions of Scripture they have no case at all in attacking the authorship of this Epistle.

## When And Where It Was Written

The Epistle itself gives no definite answer to these questions. Some have attempted to fix the date as being before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. They base their assumption on chapter 2:18 and claim that "the last time" means the closing days for Jerusalem, which is incorrect. The term, "the last time," has in this Epistle the same meaning as in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 3:1, and therefore does not mean the last days before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. But it is clear that John wrote the fourth Gospel record first and his Epistle was written after the Gospel, so that the Epistle was written possibly about the year 90, preceding the Revelation, which was written about the year 96.

Irenaeus states that the Gospel was written by John in Ephesus; an ancient tradition states that the Epistle was written from the same place.

## To Whom Was It Written

The fact that this Epistle starts, unlike the other Epistles, without any address, introductory greeting or closing salutation, has led some to call it a treatise and not an Epistle. But the personal address and appeal, the style throughout fully sustains the epistolary character. Others, again, have termed the Epistle a second part of the Gospel (Michaelis), while others speak of it as an introduction to the Gospel. That the Epistle is closely related to the Gospel is very true, but that does not necessitate a closer external relationship.

Dr. Bullinger, in the Companion Bible, suggests that this Epistle also was originally addressed to believing Hebrews in the dispersion. This view was held by others before him (Benson and others); but there is nothing whatever in the Epistle to warrant such a conclusion. On account of a remark by Augustinus on 1 John 3:2 that John wrote "to the Parthians many commentators have adopted this view, which is, however, without any foundation whatever. The Epistle was evidently not addressed to any one church but to believers in a number of assemblies. John was acquainted with these believers, who seemed to have been mostly Gentile converts. (See Chapter 5:21). If the tradition is true that the Epistle was written in Ephesus, it is not improbable that it was sent to the seven churches in the province of Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, the churches to whom the Lord sent the messages a few years later when John was in Patmos.

## The Purpose of the Epistle

The purpose of the Epistle is stated by the writer in two places; "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (1:4). "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13). According to the Gospel of John (chapter 20:31), this also is the purpose of the Gospel. He writes to those who believe on the Son of God and who have that eternal life which was manifested in the Lord Jesus, and which is imparted to all who believe on the Son of God and which establishes fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Epistle has been rightly called a family letter, that is, believers are viewed as the family of God, hence the repeated use of the word *teknia*, children. The Gospel of John was written on account of the false teachings concerning the Person of Christ, which began in the second half of the first century. (See Introduction to John's Gospel.)

The Epistle of John is very outspoken against those errors touching the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrificial work. They flourished later under the name of Gnosticism, Docetism, Montanism and others. Marcion, a Gnostic leader, when Polycarp, the disciple of John met him, was addressed by Polycarp with these words, "I know thee, thou firstborn of Satan." While these evil doctrines and denials were not yet fully developed in John's day, they existed and increased, hence the warnings in chapter 2:18-25 and 4:1-6. What antichristianity is will be learned from these passages. All the evil systems of today, which are sweeping with increasing force through

Christendom towards their divinely appointed and revealed doom are exposed in this Epistle in their true character. Christian Science, falsely so called; the liberal theology, which denies that Christ is the virgin-born Son of God, the modern religion, the destructive criticism and other systems and cults are all branded by John as antichrists. These many antichrists are finally to be merged into a personal antichrist, the man of sin. Our annotations will enlarge upon all this.

## The Message of the Epistle

The Epistle has a deep spiritual message for the children of God. As already stated, the Epistle, like the Gospel of John, witnesses to Christ as the Son of God and the eternal life which He is Himself and which He imparts to the believer. Thus the Epistle opens, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (And the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The great truth which is developed by the Holy Spirit is not so much the life which the believer has in Christ, that is, the eternal life imparted unto him, but it is that life which is in the believer, and the manifestation of that life, a manifestation of the same characteristics as manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ in His blessed life. As born of God, believers have God as their Father, they are children of God. God is light and God is love and, therefore, those who are born of God, in whom there is eternal life, must also manifest light and love, walk in righteousness and in love. This is the message of the First Epistle of John. All the blessed things which cluster around it we shall discover in our analysis and annotations.

## The Division of The First Epistle of John

The divisions of the First Epistle of John have always been considered a difficulty, so that leading expositors of the past have expressed the belief that there is no contextual connection at all in the Epistle. Calvin shares this belief as well as others. Bengel in his great work "The Gnomen" maintained that there is a logical and contextual arrangement. He divided the Epistle in three parts, naming them in Latin as follows:

I. Exordium--Introduction 1:1-4.

II. Tractatio--Treatment and discussion 1:5-5:12

III. Conclusio--Conclusion 5:13-21.

The Numerical Bible gives also a three-fold division.

I. God as Light and in the light and the light in us: 1-2:11.

II. Growth by the truth, which is nothing else but the light manifested: 2:12-27.

III. The manifestation of the children of God by the fruit found: 2:28-5.

This is a helpful arrangement. The Scofield Bible gives two main divisions.

I. The Family with the Father: 1-3:24.

II. The Family and the world: 4-5.

We divide the Epistle into six sections as follows:

I. THE LIFE MANIFESTED (1:1-4)

II. LIGHT AND DARKNESS AND THE TESTS (1:5-2:17)

III. ERROR AND TRUTH (2:18-27)

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE AS MANIFESTED BY THE CHILDREN OF GOD (2:28-3:18)

V. HEREBY WE KNOW (3:19-5:13)

VI. THE CONCLUSION (5:14-21)

## Analysis and Annotations

### I. THE LIFE MANIFESTED

#### CHAPTER 1:1-4

The opening verses of this Epistle are very precious and are the key to the whole Epistle. Three Scriptures speak of what was in the beginning. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This is the beginning of all things which God called into existence out of nothing. "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This takes us beyond the first verse of the Bible. It reveals Him, by whom and for whom God created all things, in His eternal existence with God and as God.

The third Scripture is the first verse of John's Epistle. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the Word of life." This is a different beginning from the beginning in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1; it means the manifestation of the Son of God in incarnation among men. He, who is the true God and the eternal life, the life and light, was manifested as man here below. This truth is stated by John in his Gospel in the fourteenth verse of the first chapter: "And the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." To this John refers in the first statement of his Epistle. John and his fellow-disciples had walked with Him and talked with Him.

It must be noted that the apostle speaks of Him as "the Word of Life"; he does not say therefore "who was from the beginning" but, which was from the beginning. First he mentions what they had heard; but one may hear a person and not be near to that person. But they were closer to the Word of Life, he writes, "which we have seen with our eyes"; yet one may have seen a person without being close to that person; but they had more than a passing vision "which we have contemplated" which is more than a mere seeing, it denotes gazing with a purpose, with a desire and with admiration. A statement of still greater nearness follows, "our hands have handled"--John and the other disciples had known Him, the Word of Life, intimately.

"And the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and hath been manifested unto us." He whom they heard, with whom they were in touch, whom they knew and gazed upon is the eternal Life which was with the Father. It is more than that He spoke of eternal Life and promised eternal Life; He Himself is eternal Life. He was with the Father and came into the world, to manifest what that life is. While He manifested the Father, as He witnessed "whosoever seeth Me seeth the Father," He also displayed as man what eternal life is in His blessed and perfect life He lived on earth. And this eternal life is communicated to all who believe on the Son of God. This life which was with the Father, manifested in the Lord Jesus on earth, is the life which is in us. ("The life has been manifested. Therefore we have no longer to seek for it, to grope after it in the darkness, to explore at random the indefinite, or the obscurity of our own hearts, in order to find it, to labor fruitlessly under the law, in order to obtain it. We behold it: it is revealed, it is here, in Jesus Christ. He who possesses Christ possesses that life.") To know then what life we possess as believers, we must not look in ourselves, or to other

believers, but to Christ and the life He manifested on earth. As another has said, "When I turn my eyes to Jesus, when I contemplate all His obedience, His purity, His grace, His tenderness, His patience, His devotedness, His holiness, His love, His entire freedom from all self seeking, I can say, that is my life. It may be that it is obscured in me; but it is none the less true, that it is my life."

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

What they had seen and heard they have declared unto others, to those who also believe on Him, so that they too might share in the same fellowship, the fellowship of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The life which believers possess, the eternal life given through grace, the life He manifested on earth and which is in us, fits us for fellowship with both the Father and the Son. What such a fellowship demands and the tests of it are developed subsequently. To have such fellowship, bestowed through grace, is the blessed calling of all the saints of God. Such fellowship is eternal life and there is nothing beyond that in heaven itself, while we enjoy it here the fullness of it will be enjoyed in glory. But what is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? It is but little understood in its real meaning. Fellowship means having things in common. The Father's delight is in Him who pleased Him so perfectly. For the Father, His blessed Son is the One altogether lovely.

Believers knowing the Son also find their delight in Him; He is for our hearts the One altogether lovely. As we then delight ourselves in Him, in His obedience, in what He is in love and devotion to the Father, we share the same feelings and thoughts with the Father, which is fellowship with the Father. Whenever the believer praises and thanks the Father for His Son, tells the Father of his deep appreciation of Him, how he loves Him, longs to be more like Him, walk even as He walked, then he is in fellowship with the Father. And the Son has given to us the knowledge of the Father. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). It is the Gospel of John where the blessed words of the Son concerning the Father are recorded. He manifested unto His own the name of the Father.

In the five chapters in the Gospel of John, beginning with the feet-washing and ending with the great intercessory prayer of our Lord (13-17) the word "Father" occurs fifty times. It is in this part of the Gospel the Son makes known the Father. Through the Son we have the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Father's love. His delight was to glorify the Father in a life of devotion and obedience. And as the believer delights Himself in the Father, honors Him and yields obedience to Him, he has fellowship with the Son, has the same thing in common with the Son. Fellowship with the Father and with the Son is therefore not a feeling or some extraordinary experience.

"All this flows, whether in the one or the other point of view, from the Person of the Son. Herein our joy is full. What can we have more than the Father and the Son? What more perfect happiness than community of thoughts, feelings, joys and communion with the Father and the Son, deriving all our joy from themselves? And if it seem difficult to believe, let us remember that, in truth, it cannot be otherwise; for, in the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost is the source of my thoughts, feelings, communion, and He cannot give thoughts different from those of the Father and the Son. They must be in their nature the same. To say that they are adoring thoughts is in the very nature of things, and only makes them more precious. To say that they are feeble and often hindered, while the Father and the Son are divine and perfect, is, if true, to say the Father and the Son are God, are divine, and we feeble creatures. That surely none will deny. But if the blessed Spirit be the source, they must be the same as to nature and fact.

This is our Christian position then, here below in time, through the knowledge of the Son of God; as the apostle says, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (John N. Darby).

## II. LIGHT AND DARKNESS AND THE TESTS

### CHAPTERS 1:5-2:17

1. God is light; walking in darkness and in light (1:5-7)
2. What the light manifests (1:8-10)
3. The advocacy of Christ to maintain the fellowship (2:1-2)
4. The tests of fellowship (2:3-17)

Chapter 1:5-7 The message they had heard of Him and which they declared to others is, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Light, perfect, pure light is God's nature; He is absolutely holy, with no darkness in Him at all. That God is light was manifested in the life of the Lord Jesus, for He was and is holy. Fellowship with the Father and the Son means, therefore, to have fellowship with light, and that excludes a walk in darkness. "if we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth." If one professes to have fellowship with God and walks in darkness, he lies, for darkness can have no fellowship with light. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

But what is this walk in the light? It is not the same thing as walking according to the light. It does not mean to live a perfect and sinless life. Walking in the light is not the question of how we wait but where we walk, and the place where the believer walks is the light. It means to walk daily in His presence, with our will and conscience in the light and presence of God, judging everything that does not answer to that light. Whatever is not right is brought at once in His presence, exposed to the light, confessed, judged and put away. Such is the walk in the light which fellowship with God demands. The result of such a walk in the light is mutual fellowship among believers, because each has the same nature of God and the same Spirit, the same Christ as the object before the heart and the same Father. It cannot be otherwise. Then there is another thing stated, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Walking in the light shows us what we are and we cannot say that we have no sin. But we have no consciousness of sin resting upon us before a holy God, though we know that sin is in us, but we have the assurance of being cleansed from it by His precious blood. Such is the blessed position of a true Christian. Fellowship with the Father and with His Son, walking in the light as He is in the light, fellowship one with another and the cleansing power of the blood.

Verses 8-10. The light makes known that sin is in us. If the believer, the child of God, says that he has no sin, the light contradicts him. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The denial of sin within is a delusion. This evil teaching that the old Adamic nature is eradicated in the believer is widespread in our day among Holiness, Pentecostal and other sects. True spirituality is to confess daily, walking in the light, that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. And if sin is committed it needs confession. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The light also manifests another evil, the claim of a sinless perfection. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us. Some have applied this verse to the unsaved; it has nothing to do with the sinner, but relates to a true believer, who in presumption makes the claim that he lives without sinning. And the reason why children of God make such unscriptural claims is inattention to His Word, for the Word makes manifest what sin is, and the Apostle says "If we say that we have not sinned ... His word is not in us."

Chapter 2:1-2. For the first time John uses the endearing term "my little children", meaning the born ones of God, who are born into the family of God by having believed on the Son of God. One might

conclude, inasmuch as belief in the eradication of the old nature and sinless perfection is a delusion, that the child of God must sin. But, while sin is within, and a sinless perfection is beyond our reach, it does not mean that the believer should continue in sin. He had written these things that they might not sin. But if any man sin a gracious provision has been made. Let it be noticed that the application, as it is often done, to the sinner who is outside, who knows not Christ at all, is totally wrong. It means the little children, the members of the family of God. If any true child of God sins we have an advocate with the Father (not God, it is the matter of the family), Jesus Christ the righteous. The advocacy of Christ restores the sinning believer to the communion with the Father and the Son which sin interrupted. He does not wait till we come repenting and confessing, but in the very moment we have sinned He exercises His blessed office as our Advocate with the Father and His intercession produces in us repentance, confession, and self-judgment. Thus we are maintained by Himself in the fellowship into which the grace of God has called and brought us.

When the believer sins it does not mean that he has lost his salvation. Many a child of God has been harassed through ignorance, and imagined that he committed the unpardonable sin. The sin of a believer does not make him unsaved or lost, but it makes fellowship with the Father and the Son impossible till the sin is judged and confessed. This is accomplished by His advocacy.

"The Lord Jesus as much lives to take up the failure of His own, as He died to put away their sins by His blood. This, too, is founded on propitiation; but there is besides the blessed fact that He is the righteousness of the believer in the presence of God. His one expiatory sacrifice avails in abiding value; His place is before God as our righteousness; and there for the failing He carries on His living active advocacy with the Father."

Verses 3-17. John now writes of the characteristics of the life which the believer has received, the eternal life and applies certain tests. The profession of a Christian is that He knows God. But how do we know that we know Him? The answer is, "If we keep His commandments." This is not legality in the least which puts the believer back under the law. John knows nothing of that. Obedience is the leading trait of the imparted life. It is set on doing the will of God. Christ walked on earth in obedience; His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him. Inasmuch as His life is in us as believers, it must manifest itself in obedience to the will of God. It is the same which we find in 1 Peter 1:2, sanctified, or set apart, unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. It is not a sinless obedience as it was in Him; while the believer has his heart set on obeying the Lord and doing His will, he often fails and stumbles, but he continues to aim at doing the will of God, for that is the nature of the new life. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him."

One who professes to know God and does not manifest obedience is no Christian at all, but he is a liar, and the truth in the knowledge of the Lord is lacking in such a one. He is a mere professing Christian, one who has the outward form of godliness but does not know the power of it, because he has not the life in him, which is His life and in which he delights to obey. The first great test of the reality of the divine life in the believer is obedience.

Then follows a second test: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." In His prayer our Lord told the Father, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world"; and again, "As Thou has sent me into the world so have I sent them into the world" (John 17:16, 18). Believers are not of the world as He is not of the world, because they are born again and have His life in them. They are in Him, abiding in Him, and therefore they must walk as He walked, which does not mean to be what He was, for He was without sin, but it is a walk after His own pattern, the reproduction of His character and life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the next two verses we read of the old commandment and of the new commandment (verses 7 and 8). The old commandment is explained, as the word which they had heard from the beginning, that is, the same beginning as mentioned in chapter 1:1, the manifestation of Christ on earth. But

what is the commandment of which he speaks next? It is something new now, for the life which was in Him on earth is in believers now. Therefore, it is true in Him and in us because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shineth. Christ is life and light and as His life is in us we share it in Him; this is that which is new. It was true of Him first, and now it is true of us, too.

This is followed by another test. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now." The life must manifest itself in love. Light and love go together; both are manifested in Christ, He was light and love. If He is, therefore, in the believer, and he possesses that life, and professes to be in the light, and with such a profession hateth his brother, he shows thereby that he is in the darkness until now. Love cannot be separated from that life and light which was in Him and which is in us as believers. He that abideth in the light loveth his brother and because he does there is no occasion of stumbling in him. In him who loves there is neither darkness nor occasion of stumbling; in him who does not love there is both darkness and stumbling. He who hates his brother is a stumbling block to himself and stumbles against everything. Not loving the brethren and manifesting hatred against them is the sure sign of being in darkness and walking in darkness. Such are the tests of Christian profession; light and love, obedience and loving the brethren; where there is no life from God there is absence of love for the brethren and a walk in darkness and not in the light. It seems that many in John's day were in that deplorable condition, while today such is almost universally the case.

Verses 12-17 contain a message to those who are in the light, who possess that life and in whom it is manifested in obedience and in love. He addresses the fathers and the young men. Before he does this he mentions that which all believers, even the most feeble, possess. "I write unto you little children (the term of endearment which means the whole family of God) because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." This is blessedly true of every child of God, Each has "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It is the thing which is settled for time and eternity for all those who are in Christ.

Then different grades are mentioned: fathers, young men and little children. The meaning is in the spiritual sense, fathers in Christ, young men in Christ and babes in Christ. The word "children" used in verses 13 and 18 is a different word from the one used in verse 12. In this chapter in verses 1, 12 and 28 the little children are all the family of God, but in verses 13 and 15 it means young converts.

The maturity of the fathers consists in knowing Him that was from the beginning, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual progress and maturity is a deep knowledge and appreciation of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrates what real Christian maturity is. He had but one desire to know Him; not I but Christ; Christ is all. The Fathers have Christ for their fullest portion and walking in Him have learned the depths of His grace and the glory of His person. They are occupied not with their experience but with Himself. It has been well said, "All true experience ends with forgetting self and thinking of Christ." To know Him, to know Him still better, to be entirely dependent on Him, to have none other but Him, never losing sight of Him-- that is the highest attainment of a Christian.

He speaks next of the young men, who have advanced in their Christian life. They had gone forward in undaunted faith and courage and overcame the difficulties; they overcame by faith the wicked one. The strength of the new life, that is, Christ, was manifested in them in conflict. The "babes," comes next, the young converts, who have not much experience in conflict. To them he writes, "Ye have known the Father." Every newborn babe in Christ cries, enabled by the Spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father." To know God as Father is the blessed birthright of every newborn soul.

Once more he writes the same to the fathers. He can add nothing to it for the highest attainment is to know Him, as the fathers know Him. But he has more to say to the young men. He tells them that they are strong, because the Word of God was abiding in them, which is the source of power and strength of every believer and because the Word of God abided in them they overcame the wicked one. Then follows the exhortation and warning not to love the world, the world of which John speaks later, which lieth in the wicked one."

This world-system in every aspect, whether we call it the social world, the political world, the commercial world, the scientific world, the religious world--all is not of the Father. All its glory is not of the Father. The love of the world is, therefore, inconsistent with the love of the Father. The controlling principles in it are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. May we remember once more that our Lord speaks concerning His own, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Grace has taken us out of this old world, with its corruption which is there by lust and has put us into another world, so to speak, in which Christ is the center and the attraction. That new sphere is our place. The only way to escape this world with its beguiling influences is by separation from it. And that separation becomes real when we know Him, as the fathers know him, and find our joy and our satisfaction in Christ. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." But if this exhortation was needed in John's day, how much more is it needed in our days, when, as never before, the god of this age blinds the eyes of them that believe not, when this world system, in its godless and seductive character, develops a power and attraction unknown before, and when on all sides professing Christians are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

### III. TRUTH AND ERROR

#### CHAPTER 2:18-27

This section contains a warning which is addressed to the babes, the little children, young believers. Truth and error, are contrasted. Seducers were trying to lead them astray, for we read in verse 26: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." He reminds them that it is "the last time," a striking expression, for since it was written centuries have come and gone, and what was true then is true now, that it is the last time; only the Lord is still patiently waiting, not willing that any should perish. Christ was manifested, the truth revealed in Him and the world rejected Him and His truth. Satan became the god of this age, with the mystery of iniquity working in it from the very beginning. Antichristianity is not a new thing of our times; it was here from the very beginning. John writes, "Even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time." And the last time has its "last days" which are now upon us.

Antichristianity is increasing on all sides till the Antichrist, the man of sin, will be revealed (2 Thess. 2). An antichrist is not a vicious lawbreaker, an out and out immoral man. An antichrist is one who rejects Christ, who does not allow His claims; who denies that Jesus is the Son of God. It is of great significance that John speaks of the antichrists in his day as having gone out from among the professing body of Christians (verse 19). They were not true believers but only professed belief, they had left the flock and gone into apostasy, "that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

In verses 22 and 23 we have a picture of the antichrists of John's day and a prophecy of antichristianity down to the end of the age when the great opposer will appear in a person, the personal antichrist. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father. He who confesseth the Son hath the Father also." Antichristianity is the denial that Jesus is the Christ. It includes every denial of the person of the Lord Jesus, the denial that He is the Son of God come into the flesh, His virgin birth and that He was sent by the Father. Such denials were prominent in John's lifetime. Gnosticism was troubling the Church. They denied the Messiahship, and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other systems were present in embryo, known later by the name of Arianism, etc. Denying the Son they denied the Father also.

These are important statements for our own days, the last days of the present age. What began in the days when the Holy Spirit penned this Epistle is now full-grown in the world. It is all about us in various forms throughout the professing church, only with this difference, the apostates in the beginning were more honest than the apostates in our times. They were in the professing church

and when they began their denials they went out, separated themselves from the true Church.

The apostates of today remain in the professing church and maintain outwardly a Christian profession, so that it becomes the solemn duty of true believers to separate themselves from these enemies of the cross of Christ. They deny both the Jewish hope, which centers in the promises of the Messiah, and the Christian hope, which is the Father and the Son. They reject the truths of the Old and the New Testament. They speak of the God of Abraham, who promised the seed to come from Abraham, as a tribal god. They make common cause with the Jewish apostates in denying that there are predictions concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament.

We give but one illustration of this fact. Jews deny that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a Messianic prophecy; the servant of Jehovah is explained to mean the nation Israel and not the Christ of God. This infidel view is held today by many preachers and teachers in various evangelical denominations, in spite of the fact that the New Testament tells us that it is Christ of whom Isaiah spoke. Rejecting Isaiah 7:14, the prophecy concerning the virgin birth, they reject the virgin birth itself, and brazenly utter the greatest blasphemy which human lips can utter, that Christ was born like any other man. They speak of Him as a great leader and teacher, as having divinity in Himself, in a degree higher than found in the rest of the race. His absolute deity is not believed; that He is the propitiation for sins is sneered at, that He will ever appear again in His glorified humanity in a second visible and glorious manifestation is ridiculed.

Thus antichristianity is present with us in the camp of Christendom in such a marked and universal way as unknown before. With denying Christ they deny the Father. All that we have seen in this Epistle concerning Him, the true God and the eternal life, fellowship with the Father and with His Son, walking in the light, the advocacy of Christ and loving the brethren, is denied by them. They speak of "love"; they speak of toleration and the "Christ- spirit." But those who are the brethren, who contend for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints, who believe on the Son of God, in His sacrificial work on the cross, are denounced by them, belittled and branded as fanatics. And the end is not yet. Let them continue in their evil ways under the guidance of the lying spirit of darkness and they may yet stoop to actual persecution of those who constitute the body of Christ. The conditions in Christendom today are the most solemn the true Church of Jesus Christ has faced. The heading up in "the Antichrist" cannot be far distant. As John writes these Christ-deniers, these blasphemers, who make the Holy Son of God the offspring of--we dare not finish the sentence! -- may speak of "the Father," but they have not the Father, because only those who confess the Son of God, Christ come in the flesh, have the Father.

John writes all this to the babes, young believers, warning them against the lie. He useth the word "liar," for such the apostates are. In using this word repeatedly, he reveals his character as "Boanerges"--the son of thunder. Then he tells these babes how they may be guarded and kept. He reminds them that they have the anointing of the Holy One, that is, the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts and with Him they have the capacity to know and judge all these things. If they follow His guidance in and through the Word they would be kept in the truth and guarded from accepting the lie.

Let us again remember it is not the fathers, or the young men John addresses, but the babes. Here is a strong argument against the teaching so widespread among true believers, that the Holy Spirit is not given to a believer in regeneration, but that the gift of the Spirit must be sought in a definite experience after conversion. This is a serious error which opens the door to the most subtle delusions as found in certain Holiness sects and Pentecostalism. Verse 24 gives another instruction and exhortation. It is the truth concerning Christ, which they had heard from the beginning, which abiding in them will keep them. And besides "the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." The teachers in this instance who tried to seduce them (verse 26) were not gifts of Christ to His body, but false teachers, who came with a lying message. They did not need these teachers; the Holy

Spirit was their teacher and infallible guide, but never apart from the written Word. All false teaching they were to repulse and fall back upon Him who guides in all truth. They were safe against all error as they abided in that.

## IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE AS MANIFESTED BY THE CHILDREN OF GOD

### CHAPTERS 2:28-3:18

1. The children of God and their coming manifestation (2:28-3:3)
2. Sin and the new nature (3:4-9)
3. Righteousness and love (3:10-18)

Chapters 2:28-3:3. The address to the babes in Christ ended with the 27th verse, and now once more he speaks of the teknia, the little children, by which all believers are meant. The exhortation has been much misunderstood. It does not mean that by abiding in Him the believer may have confidence at His appearing. John speaks of himself and other servants of Christ, who minister the gospel and the truth of God. He urges the little children to abide in Him, "that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." He wants them to walk carefully, to be faithful in all things, so that John and the other servants may not be left ashamed in that coming day. It is the same truth which Paul mentions in 1 Thess. 2:19-20.

Verse 29 mentions the test of righteousness. It is an acid test. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." But the purpose of it is not to question the reality of their salvation as born again, to make them doubt, but the test is given so that they might be enabled to reject a spurious profession. Before he proceeds with the truth expressed in this verse, he mentions the fact that as born of God they are the children of God and what they shall be.

In verses 1 and 2 the word "sons of God" must be changed to "children of God." John never speaks of "sons of God" in his message. It is in the writings of Paul the Holy Spirit speaks of believers as "sons and heirs." But John unfolds the truth that believers are in the family of God by the new birth, hence the use of the word "children" to denote the community of nature as born of God. As children of God we are partakers of the divine nature. It is the love of the Father which has bestowed this upon all who believe. And most emphatically the Spirit of God assures us through the pen of John, "Now we are the children of God." There can be no doubt about it, it is our present and known position, because having believed on Him we are born again and are in possession of eternal life.

That which we shall be has not yet been manifested, but while it is not yet manifested we, nevertheless, know what we shall be. But how do we know? We know it because the Holy Spirit has revealed it in the Word of God. "But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This is our blessed assurance! To this God has called us; it is "the hope of His calling" (Ephesians 1:18). It is that to which we are predestined, to see Him as He is and then infinitely more than that "to be like Him." We see Him now by faith in His Word and are changed into the same image from glory to glory; when we shall see Him in that soon coming day, when He comes for His saints, we shall see Him bodily and then our bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Of all this the world knows nothing. It knew Him not, knew not His life, nor His glory; it does not know the life which is in the children of God and what glory awaits them. And this hope is a purifying hope. We see that John speaks of the blessed hope as Peter and James, addressing Jewish believers, do not.

Verses 4-9. He makes a contrast between sin and the new nature and shows the marks of one who

abides in Christ and one who hath not seen Him neither knows Him. "Every one that practiseth sin, practiseth lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness, this is the correct rendering. The definition of sin as "transgression of the law" is misleading and incorrect. Before there ever was a law, sin was in the world (Romans 5:12, etc.); how then can sin be the transgression of the law? It is not sins of which John speaks, but sin, the evil nature of man. Here the apostle regards man as doing nothing else but his own, natural will; he lives as a natural man. He acts independently of God, and, as far as he is concerned, never does anything but his own will. John is, therefore, not speaking of positive overt acts, but of the natural man's habitual bent and character, his life and nature.

The sinner, then, sins, and in this merely shows in it his state and the moral root of his nature as a sinner, which is lawlessness. But the born one, the child of God, is in a different position. He knows that Christ was manifested to take away our sins and that in Him there was no sin. If one knows Him and abideth in Him, that one sinneth not. If the believer sins it is because he has lost sight of Christ and does not act in the new life imparted unto him. Another object usurps the place of Christ, and then acting in self-will he is readily exposed to the wiles of the devil using his old nature and the world to lead him astray. If a man lives habitually in sin, according to his old nature, he hath not seen Him nor known Him. A child of God may sin but he is no longer living in sin; if a professing believer lives constantly in sin it is the evidence that he has not known Him at all. There were such who tried to deceive them. Their teaching was evidently a denial of holiness, that there was no need of righteousness. But the demand is for righteousness, while those who practise sin, live habitually in it, are of the devil. No true believer lives thus, for he knows the One whose life he possesses was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is begotten of God doth not practise sin, because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." This verse has puzzled many Christians, but it is quite simple. Every creature lives according to its nature. The fish has the nature of a fish and lives its nature in the water; a bird has its own nature and lives it in the air, and not under the water as the fish. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man has a fallen nature, the nature of sin, and that nature can do nothing but sin. That is why He said, "Ye must be born again." In the new birth the divine nature is imparted. This nature is He Himself, Christ, the eternal life. Christ could not sin for He is God, and God cannot sin. The new nature believers possess cannot sin, for it is His nature. But why do new-born ones sin? Because the Christian has two natures, the old nature and the new nature. The old nature is not eradicated; a believer when he sins does so because he has given way to that old nature, has acted in the flesh. But the new nature followed will never lead to sin, for it is a holy nature, and for that nature it is impossible to sin. Some have suggested out of ignorance that the translation ought to be instead of cannot sin "ought not to sin," or "should not sin." The Greek text does not permit such a translation, anything different from "cannot sin" is an unscriptural paraphrase.

Verses 10-18. The test as to the children of God and the children of the devil follows in this section. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. The message from the beginning, that is the same beginning as in chapter 1:1--is that we should love one another. This was the commandment given by the Lord, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). There is natural affection in the world, even in the animal creation. The natural man also can make himself amiable and speak of love and toleration. In fact an amiable character, a loving disposition through self-improvement is urged and practised among the antichristian cults, such as New Thought, Christian Science and the Liberalists, the advocates of the new theology.

But the love of which John speaks is exclusively of God and unknown to the natural heart of man. Yet all these antichrists go to the Epistle of John and quote him to confirm their evil doctrine of "the brotherhood of man and the universal fatherhood of God." John does not speak of loving man as such, but loving the brethren, the other born ones in the family of God, and that is a divine love. It is the great test of the divine nature, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The world not only knows nothing of that divine love, but the world hates those

who are born of God. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." This fact is illustrated by Cain. He was of the devil. He slew his brother because Cain's works were evil, he was an unbeliever, and his brother's were righteous, Abel believed and that was counted to him for righteousness. And so the world hates the brethren, the children of God on the same ground and for the same reason. Then again he tests profession: "He who loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Hating the brother is the evidence that the professing Christian is in the state of death and linked with the murderer from the beginning.

The better rendering of verse 16 is, "Hereby we know love, because He laid down His life for us." Such love must be manifested in practical ways towards the brethren.

"But 'we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' Not because we love certain of the brethren, let us remember. We may love even the children of God for some other reason than as His children. We may love them, perhaps in gratitude to them for services that we may be receiving from them. Further than this, we may mistake for brotherly love that which is merely self-love in a subtler form. Men minister to our comfort, please us, and we think we love them; and in the true child of God there may be yet, after all, as to much that he counts love to the brethren, a similar mistake. A love to the children of God, as such, must find its objects wherever these children are, however little may be, so to speak, our gain from them; however, little they may fit to our tastes. The true love of the children of God must be far other than sociality, and cannot be sectarian. It is, as the Apostle says, 'without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' This does not, of course, deny that there may be differences that still obtain. He in whom God is most seen should naturally attract the heart of one who knows God according to the apostle's reasoning here. It is God seen in men whom we recognize in the love borne to them; but, then, God is in all His own, as the apostle is everywhere arguing; and, therefore, there is nothing self contradictory in what has been just said." -- F.W. Grant.

## V. HEREBY WE KNOW

### CHAPTERS 3:19-5:13

1. Hereby we know that we are of the truth (3:19-24)
2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God (4:1-4)
3. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and of error (4:5-6)
4. The Love manifested toward us (4:7-19)
5. The final tests as to the possession of eternal life (4:20-5:13)

Verses 19-24. If the love of God dwells in the heart of the child of God it must be manifested in a practical way. Love must be expressed in deed and in truth, which is the fruit of true faith. If the believer does this he knows that he is of the truth. If it is lacking he is but an empty professing believer. But if we know that we are of the truth, by bearing such fruit of faith, we can assure our hearts before Him, and we can draw nigh with confidence. As our hearts do not condemn us, knowing that we are of the truth, we have confidence toward God and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Where there is not a good conscience and the Holy Spirit is grieved real nearness to God and the effectual prayer which availeth much are impossible. It is the same blessed truth our Lord spoke in connection with the parable of the vine. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you (John 15:7).

But what is His commandment? Strange that some expositors have read into it the Ten Commandments. The context answers the question: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

And He that keepeth His commandment dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit He hath given to us."

Chapter 4:1-4. The last sentence of the preceding chapter gives the assurance that the believer has the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as a true child of God without the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the proof that He Himself dwells in us. But how do we know that it is the Spirit of God? How can a test be made? The sphere of the Spirit is the territory in which the spirit of error and darkness operates and where the liar from the beginning counterfeits. Many false prophets inspired by the spirit of darkness had gone out into the world and the apostle gives a warning not to believe every spirit but to try the spirits. The true test is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

But this means more than a mere confession with the lips, it means to own the person and lordship of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The demons know how to confess Him and yet they are demons (Matthew 8:29). The spirit of antichrist denies Him, does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This spirit which is not the Spirit of God manifests itself in the most subtle forms. It is called "true Christian charity" in our days to make common cause in what is called "social service" with those who do not confess Christ, who do not own Him as Saviour and Lord. These many antichrists speak of Him as man, they go so far as to call Christ a manifestation of God in human form, but they deny that He is very God come in the flesh.

As stated before the most prominent form of it is today the denial of His virgin birth. Anything which denies the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ which in any way detracts from His glory, is the spirit of antichrist. About a hundred years ago a movement was in existence which claimed to be another Pentecost, just as there are movements today which claim the same unscriptural thing. The leader of that movement, Edward Irving, put great stress upon the incarnation, that Jesus came in the flesh. But after a while the demons which stood behind the movement brought forth the horrible doctrine of the peccability of Christ, that He had a corrupt nature like any other man. Such is the subtlety of Satan, the old serpent. He always strikes at Christ and His glory.

"The false prophets are certainly no fewer in number at the present time than when the apostle spoke; yet, in general, we may say they assume less divine authority. We have sunk down so far into the wisdom of the world that man is credited with a place which God has lost. Inspiration is the inspiration of genius, rather than of God. We are more and more getting to lose the reality of the last, just as we are coming more and more to believe in the former. We believe in brilliancy, in eloquence, in intellect, in whatever you please in this way, but the assumption of speaking in any direct way by the Spirit of God no more exists, for the mass, except as one may say that the Spirit of God is as liberal as men are, and speaks in very diverse fashion--in poets, philosophers, and all the acknowledged leaders among men" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 5-6. The fifth verse has a good description of these antichrists and their following. These men, with their boasted learning and scholarship, their great swelling words, called eloquence, their natural amiability and cultured, courteous manners are of the world. They were never born again. If they had ever seen themselves lost and undone, and found in Christ their peace with God, they would yield complete obedience to Him and not deny His glory. When they speak they speak of the world. They speak of world conditions, and how they may be improved, of a better human society. Quite true they are even religious, but what they speak is not that which is of the Spirit, but what concerns the world system. The crowds want to hear that for it pleases the flesh, and thus the devil brings his audience to hear them. Such antichrists in cap and gown have multiplied by the thousands; they are found in the leading pulpits of all denominations.

The test as to the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error is stated in these words: "We are of God; He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and of error." The test is the apostle's doctrine. The Epistles are the full revelation of the doctrine of Christ, they contain the "many things" which the Lord spoke of when on earth, and which

should be revealed when the Holy Spirit came. He has come and has made known the blessed things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but which are now revealed by His Spirit, the Spirit of truth (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). The spirit of error denies these doctrines. In our day the enemy has invested a most subtle slogan, "Back to Christ." It sounds well but behind it stands the father of lies. These men who speak of going back to Christ charge our beloved brother Paul with having a theological system of his own, which they claim Christ, on earth, never taught. They reject the great redemption truths made known by the Lord through the apostle to the Gentiles. Their cry "Back to Christ" is the spirit of antichrist.

Verses 7-19. These blessed words are addressed to the beloved, true believers. The great center of this passage is "God is Love." Love is of God. But how do we know that God is Love? Such an antichristian system as "Christian Science" babbles about the love of God, but that which alone expresses the love of God, and by which it is known that God is love, they reject completely. The question, how do we know that God is love? is answered in verses 9 and 10. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Apart from this there is no knowledge of the love of God. He who is born again knows that love, for in believing it (John 3:16) he receives eternal life, and that love was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him--not that we loved God, but that He loved us. In His great love He has met every need.

This love, the nature of God, is in those who are born again, Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." Love therefore is the very essence of the new nature and must be manifested towards all who are the objects of the love of God and are in the family of God by having believed that love.

"His presence, Himself, dwelling in us rises in the excellency of His nature above all the barriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling and diffuses itself among them in whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us, What happiness! What a bond! Does He not communicate Himself to the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love? Assuredly, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear, or distance, or uncertainty, with regarding to what He is? None at all. His love is perfect in us" (John N. Darby).

His love is perfected in us by loving one another. Once more he uses the phrase "Hereby we know." "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." "The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the indwelling Spirit." He proceeds: "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in Him and he in God." What wonderful words these are! Can there be anything greater and more wonderful than dwelling in God and God dwelling in us! And this is true of every believer. If we confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if we rest in His finished work as well, knowing the Father sent Him to be the Saviour, and our Saviour therefore, then the Holy Spirit dwells in us and as a result God dwelleth in us and we in God. There can be no question about it for God says so.

The enjoyment of it is a different matter. If it is not real to us and if we do not enjoy it there is something which hinders it in ourselves. If a great king should pay us a visit in our home and dwell there and we do not recognize the fact of the honor and privilege bestowed upon us, and if we do

not trouble about it and show our appreciation of it, we would have no enjoyment in such a visit. To have the reality of it and enjoy the wonderful truth that God dwells in us and we in Him we must practise what our Lord said in John 14:23, "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode in Him." We must dwell in love, the very nature of God, and that love is manifested towards Him and towards the brethren. Verses 12 and 16 make this clear. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Another important fact is stated in the verses which follow: "Herein hath love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear has torment; and he that feareth is not perfected in love." It has nothing to do with our love, as some take it nor with seeking an experience of being "perfect in love." It is His love which casteth out fear, believing that love and dwelling in it. If we believe and know what God has made us in His infinite grace what Christ is, that as He is so are we, how can we fear anything! The coming day of judgment we await not only without any fear, but with boldness, for the day will only bring the full display of what Christ is and what we are in Him and with Him. The knowledge of His perfect love, the love which has reached down to us and lifted us so high, casteth out all fear.

("It is a blessed love that Christ came into the world for such sinners as we are. But then there is the day of judgment. When I think of the love, I am all happy; but when I think of the day of judgment, my conscience is not quite easy. Though the heart may have tasted the love, the conscience not being quite clear, when I think of judgment I am not quite happy. This is what is provided for here. 'As He is so are we in this world.' The love was shown in visiting us when we were sinners; it is enjoyed in communion: but it is completed in this, that I am in Christ, and that Christ must condemn Himself in the day of judgment, if He condemns me, because He is, so am I in the world, I am glorified before I get there. He changes this vile body and makes it like to His glorious body. When I am before the judgment seat, I am in this changed and glorified body; I am like my judge" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 4:20-5:13. Once more brotherly love is applied as the test. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." God is in the believer, he is the object of God's love, if therefore the brother is not loved, but hated, it is an evidence that God does not dwell in such a heart and again the beloved disciple brands such an one as a liar.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." This is very logical. Then he gives a counter test to show that it is genuine. "By this we know, that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." If we love God and keep His commandments, we can rest assured that we love the children of God also. If the soul goes out to Him in love, and it is shown by unreserved fidelity to His will, then love for those begotten of Him, the other members of the family of God, will be the result. "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." It is a different thing from the law which is called elsewhere a yoke which no one was able to bear (Acts 15:10). Keeping His commandments means to be obedient to His Word, being subject unto Him in all things, for love to God is the spirit of obedience. But the children of God are in the world, though no longer of it. There are hindrances all about in the world which knew Him not and which know not the children of God. All in this world is opposition to God and hinders true obedience. But that which is born of God overcometh the world. Our faith is the victory which overcometh the world. What faith is it? It is the faith which is occupied with the Son of God, which yields obedience to Him, does His will. Such a faith is the victory that overcomes the world and its attractions. This is stated in verse 5.

"And He, the Son of God, even Jesus Christ, came by water and blood-not by water only, but by water and blood." "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (verse 6). How beautiful is this passage and what divine perfection it reveals! Only John in his Gospel gives

the account of the opened side of our adorable Saviour and that water and blood came forth out of the pierced side. "And he that saw it (John) bare record and his record is true and he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe" (John 19:35). What the sinner needs is cleansing, a cleansing morally and a cleansing from guilt. The water is for cleansing, the blood telling of expiation cleanses from guilt. To make here of the water, baptism, and of the blood, the Lord's Supper, is as false as it is ridiculous. It is purification and propitiation as accomplished and provided for in the death of Christ for the believer. As a result the Holy Spirit is here on earth. Note the Apostle John does not put forward his own testimony here as given in the above passage, but the Holy Spirit Himself beareth witness to it. He is on earth for this purpose to bear witness to Christ and the work of Christ. How awful the rejection of that witness appears in the light of these words--that rejection which is so widespread and pronounced in antichristian modernism!

The seventh verse has no business in our Bibles. It must be stricken out. It is an interpolation and all the historical evidences are against it. The oldest manuscripts do not contain these words which we read in verse 7. Leaving out this inserted verse we notice the connection which exists between verse 6 and 8. "And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three are one." The Spirit is the abiding witness of accomplished redemption, and He dwells in the believer.

Verses 9-13 need no further detailed annotations. They are so plain and simple that only one wilfully blind can misunderstand them. God's witness is concerning His Son. The believer who believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, that is, by the indwelling Spirit, and by the salvation he possesses, the new nature, the eternal life. Any man who does not believe God's witness concerning His Son hath made Him a liar. Think of it, dear reader, the creature of the dust makes God, who cannot lie, a liar! This is the heinous sin of the great religious world. The record we have is, that God hath given to us eternal life, that this life is in His Son, that if we have the Son we have life, if we have not the Son we have not life. Verse 13 concludes the argument and teaching of the Epistle concerning eternal life.

## VI. CONCLUSION

### CHAPTER 5:14-21

The conclusion of this great Epistle mentions first the practical confidence which a believer may have, the outcome of that relationship and fellowship with the Father and His Son, which the doctrinal part so blessedly unfolds. We can come in prayer to Him with boldness and whatever we ask "according to His will He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." As a loving Father He listens to the cry of His children and He answers if it is according to His will, and the child of God would not have it differently, and desire anything to be granted him which is contrary to the will of God. Our unanswered prayers we joyfully recognize as being not according to His will. It is not true faith when fanatics, like faith curists, say that God must do certain things. That is not faith but presumption.

But what is the sin unto death (verse 16)? God chastises the sinning believer often through sickness. And the chastisement may lead to the physical death of the child of God. Such was the case in Corinth (1 Corinth. 11:31). It is the same case as James 5:14, 15. If the sin is not unto physical death as a chastisement, we can pray for the brother and he will be restored. But there is a sin unto death. Ananias and Sapphira committed such a sin. No prayer in such a case does avail anything. God in His governmental dealings takes the offender away as to his life on earth. It does not affect the salvation of the soul, as those teach who think that one who has believed, has eternal life, and is a member of the family of God, can be lost again.

The conclusion of the Epistle consists in three statements that "we know": "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that

wicked one toucheth him not." Sin is the touch of the wicked one. If the believer guards himself, by living in the fellowship with the Father and the Son, walking in the Light, the wicked one cannot reach him; he lives according to his new nature and sinneth not. "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Hence God's children should be separated from the world. If a believer is not he moves on the very territory of the wicked one and the author of sin finds occasion to touch him and lead him to sin. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The final exhortation is "Little children (teknia--all God's children), keep yourselves from idols. Amen." What is an idol? Anything and everything that draws the affection and devotion of heart and soul from the Lord Jesus Christ. May He, through the power of His Spirit, keep us all from idols. And we shall be kept if we give in our hearts and lives the preeminence to our Lord and walk in the light as He is in the light.