

Let's Revel in

John's Letters

A Devotional Study in the Epistles of John
New American Standard Version

John G. Mitchell, D.D.

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Scripture used in this volume is taken from the New American Standard Bible.

This volume first appeared in 1974 under the title, "Fellowship, Three Letters from John." It was edited by Mrs. Mary Mitchell, his wife, and Dr. Dorothy Ritzmann, a dear friend. It was originally published by the then Multnomah Press.

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THE JOHN G. MITCHELL HOME LIBRARY

Dedication

Dr. Willard M. Aldrich, Th.D.

Like sons of thunder,
Dr. Willard and Dr. John
taught,
prayed,
and served
beside one another as
associates,
brothers,
companions,
defenders,
enthusiasts,
friends
for more than 50 years.

With Dr. John taking the more public ministry
and Dr. Willard, as long-time president
of the Multnomah School of the Bible,
the more private,
the two served their Savior
with unrivaled devotion.

**The one could not have served so well
without the other.**

Who is John G. Mitchell?

“I have not walked in the shadow of many giants in my lifetime, but John G. Mitchell was certainly one. My life is richer and my love for Christ is deeper because of his towering presence and godly influence.”

Charles R. Swindoll, President, Dallas Theological Seminary

“I thank God most for his Bible studies. I have used his notes on Romans to preach across the Spanish-speaking world on radio and television. They were invaluable to me in preparing those messages.”

Luis Palau, Evangelist

“Dr. Jack was a remarkable human being, deeply dedicated to Jesus Christ and the Word of God. He set a standard for us that was scriptural and still only rarely equaled. I know he left his mark on me and on many, many Navigators—a mark that can never be erased.”

Lorne Sanny, President, The Navigators

“I would say the authority of the Word of God and the Person of Christ were the two things that stand out in my mind as I recall his impression on me. He gave me a love for the Word. He gave me a love for the Saviour. He gave me a love for people.”

Prof. Howard Hendricks, Dallas Theological Seminary

“He had, certainly, a practical deep submission to the Word of God. His own heart and life were subject to it. It's like D. L. Moody said of the Word of God, “Do we need to defend it? No. It is like a lion. Loose it and let it go.” That was characteristic of his life. He had a wise simplicity in his approach to the Scripture. He was not simple; you know that. But he approached it from a practical point of view.”

Willard M. Aldrich, President Emeritus, Multnomah Bible College

“Dr. Mitchell's life was marked by faithfulness to Christ, by integrity with His message. He was a model of a loving heavenly Father to all who have come in contact with him and a man caught up in the wonder of the matchless Name and the love of his Saviour.”

Duane Hallof, student

This book is part of the Mitchell Home Library (*Let's Revel in John's Gospel, Let's Revel in John's Letters, Let's Revel in Romans, and Lion of God*, the biography). The late John G. Mitchell, D.D., a founder of the Multnomah Bible College, pastor of Central Bible Church (Portland, Oregon, USA), and teacher on radio's "Know Your Bible Hour," taught the Bible to God's people for approximately 75 years.

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Foreword

Those who have enjoyed the public ministry of Dr. John G. Mitchell in the pulpit, classroom, and his radio broadcasts have profited greatly by his warm and penetrating expositions of the Word of God. To an unusual degree, Dr. Mitchell has the gift of making the Word of God practical in relating it to the believer's walk with his Saviour.

The same intimate and stimulating ministry which has characterized his teaching is captured in this exposition of the first Epistle of John. By nature of its contents this epistle of John is addressed to the family of God. Although containing many important theological truths, the emphasis in this epistle is on the practical application of it to the walk of the believer. This epistle is unusually suited to express the main thrust of Dr. Mitchell's effective ministry, as he has preached the gospel for more than fifty years.

Many preachers of the Word who are successful in the pulpit become lifeless when their words are reduced to writing. Dr. Mitchell is the exception to this rule. His exposition of this epistle has the same warm touch which characterizes his public ministry. Readers will find their hearts blessed, their souls encouraged, and their minds instructed by the truth of God.

Any exposition of the Epistle of John has unusual problems because its structure is not organized theologically in the same way that is true of the Epistle of the Romans. A suitable outline of the First Epistle of John has often puzzled expositors. Dr. Mitchell has surmounted this problem, and his exposition of this epistle flows smoothly from one theme to the next, reflecting the maturity of years of study and rich spiritual experience on the part of the one giving the exposition.

Accordingly, it is a genuine pleasure to recommend this exposition to all who want to know more of the marvelous revelation presented in this inspired book of the Bible.

John F. Walvoord
President, Dallas Theological Seminary

PREFACE

These messages were given on the radio program "Know Your Bible Hour," and many have asked that they be printed. The teacher has gleaned from many sources and only desires that the children of God should know the Lord to whom they have been joined, and have daily fellowship with Him.

It is wonderful to know we can have fellowship with God who is Light, 1:5; with God who is Righteous, 2:29, 3:7: and with God who is Love, 4:8, 16. What a privilege and what a joy the believer can have in fellowship with Him.

I am very grateful to Dr. Dorothy Ritzmann and my wife, Mary Mitchell, for the many hours they have spent in editing this brief series of messages. This book would not have been written without their help and encouragement. I am sure the Lord will richly bless them for all the time they have spent in this ministry.

J.G.M.

THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP

The heart of God yearns for the fellowship of His people. We hear men speak of how we ought to have fellowship with God, and rightly so. But do we ever think that the Lord yearns and longs for our fellowship? This was why God created man, but man failed God. This was why God redeemed sinners, in order that He might have someone with whom He can have fellowship.

In Amos 3:3 we read,

Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?"

We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have an appointment with God, and God has an appointment with us. God always keeps His appointments. We are the ones who do not keep the appointment with God.

Adam and Eve had an appointment with God.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9).

Sin did not keep God from the appointment, but it did keep Adam from it. We have an appointment with God, and sin keeps us from meeting with Him.

This truth is all through the Bible. God wants our fellowship. He found fellowship with Enoch, a man who lived in an ungodly world. He found Noah, who lived in a violent world. Then He found

Abraham who lived in an idolatrous, corrupt world (cf. Romans 1). Note how God enjoyed His fellowship with Abraham, who is called the friend of God in 2 Chronicles 20:7. "Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham Thy friend forever?" and in Isaiah 41:8, "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend" (cf. Genesis 18:17).

Exodus 33:11 reveals that God enjoyed intimate friendship with Moses, who lived among a stiff-necked, murmuring people, "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." This is restated in Deuteronomy 34:10, "Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

Such fellowship has ever been the desire of the Father God from the beginning. Even our Lord expressed it to His disciples in John 15:15,

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

This is not only relationship, but intimacy of fellowship. It is the great desire of the heart of God that we should know something of how much He wants our fellowship.

This is the heartbeat of the Epistles of John. In chapter 1:3-4 we read, "And indeed our fellowship (partnership) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete."

May our Lord by His Spirit through His Word make this very real to you, personally and individually, and may He bring you unto Himself in such sweet fellowship.

What does He desire?

Our fellowship.

J.G.M.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

(General Remarks)

Did you ever stop to think that the world never understood Jesus?

God the Son took His place among men and lived in the human family. He never sought wealth or fame or power. All He wanted was His Father's will. Hence the world disowned Him, cast Him out and crucified Him.

The world still wants to carry on its program without God and without God's people. In many ways Christians are a thorn in the flesh to those leaders who wish to bring in a world dominion without God.

The world is turning more and more away from God. It neither wants Him nor His interference with its plans and its programs. When we declare that we are the children of One who is God, this world, which never knew the Saviour, will not want to know us either.

The world has no place for Christ. The world has no place for us.

The Apostle John put his finger on this nerve. This theme permeates his Gospel and his Letters.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, *therefore the world hates you.*

Remember the word that I said to you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also (John 15:18-20)

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Written centuries ago, the Epistles of John read as if he had our generation in mind. He is absolutely up-to-date. We can do ourselves no greater favor than to steep ourselves—to revel—in the message of this book.

The Epistle of John was written approximately twenty-five years after Paul wrote his prison epistles. According to the historian Clement, it was after John had returned from the Isle of Patmos, where he had written the Book of Revelation, that he wrote the First Epistle of John. He had been set at liberty from his slavery by the Romans and had gone to Ephesus. While in Ephesus, the aged John wrote this precious letter.

If Dr. Westcott, the great British Greek scholar, is correct (and I believe he is), the First Epistle of John is the last of the New Testament writings. Considering this, it is interesting to compare the first verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God," with the last two verses written in the Epistle of John, stating He is God, true God, on through eternity.

That we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Little children, guard yourselves from idols (5:20-21).

One of the reasons for the writing of this Epistle was that John might warn against a heresy that had sprung up in the early church. It was called the Gnostic heresy. The Gnostics denied the Incarnation. They did not believe that God

could be manifest in human flesh. They said that matter is evil, and it was unthinkable to them that a holy God could take the form of man.

In his answer to the Gnostics, John declares emphatically that there can be no spiritual life, no fellowship or relationship with God apart from the Incarnate Word of God. In his declaration, he carries us into the glorious heights of the marvelous revelation of God in Christ.

He makes it very clear that the yearning of his own heart and the yearning of the heart of God is that every redeemed child of His might enjoy to the full an intimate fellowship with God. This fellowship is to be found through relationship with the Incarnate Word of God.

This, then, is the emphasis of this Epistle. Here we have the truth concerning the Incarnate Word and the blessed privilege of our fellowship with Him.

RELATION OF THE EPISTLE OF JOHN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

In every book of the New Testament the person of Jesus Christ is pre-eminent. The first four books of the New Testament are the four Gospels in which we find the wonderful story of the coming of our Saviour into the world and His life here for thirty-three-and-a-half years. The Acts of the Apostles is the history of the beginning of His church. The Epistles have to do with doctrine and instruction. There are three principal authors of the epistles:

Paul, the Apostle of faith

Peter, the Apostle of hope

John, the Apostle of love

The New Testament concludes with the Book of the Revelation which gives to us the prophecy of the last days and the return of the Lord.

Let us now briefly compare John's Gospel with his Epistle. In the Gospel of John we read:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

In the Epistle of John this is restated:

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 4:10 and 3:16).

Thus the Epistle of John reinforces the basic gospel truth as it is set forth in the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John gives us the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:9,

“Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”

In the Gospel, He is made flesh to dwell among us and we have our relationship with Him. The important truth in the Gospel of John is that we have life in and through the Son of God. In Him was life (John 1:4).

The Gospel tells us that we receive eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when we accept Him into our life as our own personal Saviour. The Epistle shows us how we are to enjoy that life in Christ.

In the Gospel, we have life because God declares it and we receive it by faith. In the Epistle, we know we have eternal life because we experience it.

In the Gospel of John, eternal life is manifested in the Son of God; in the Epistle of John life is manifested in the children of God. In the Gospel, we find that life can come only through relationship with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. In the Epistle, we cannot have fellowship with God apart from the Incarnate Word of God.

We stress that both relationship and fellowship are dependent on the Incarnate Word of God. Heresies of the present day declare Christ to be a

mere man, a good man, and a wonderful teacher, but not God Incarnate. This we must refute.

It is also interesting to compare the Book of Hebrews with this Epistle of John. Hebrews shows God in His governmental dealings with His people. In Hebrews, we are “outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:13) in our relationship to the world but “*within the veil . . . the holy place*” (Hebrews 6:19; 10:19-22) in our relationship to God. We have access into the presence of God.

The Epistle of John sets forth the relationship in the family of God. In John’s Epistle, we not only enter into the Holy of Holies, into heaven itself, but we have fellowship with the God who is there. This is the amazing truth! We, who are created beings, members of the human family, born in sin, rebels against God, can be redeemed, born again, become recipients of His life in us, and be brought into such a relationship with God that we can come with boldness to the very throne of God.

Not only this, but also we can have intimate, blessed fellowship with the One who is on the throne. This is the unspeakable glorious truth of the First Epistle of John.

THE THEME OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

1:3. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

In this Epistle we have the wonderful truth concerning the family of God. The word “children” is used many times. John emphasizes the fact of the fellowship in the family. It is not only fellowship one with another but also with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

In John’s Gospel he tells us how we become children of God.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

Here, in the Epistle, he shows us the blessings and responsibilities we have as the children of God.

The main theme of the Epistle is fellowship with God.

In John's Gospel we have life through the Incarnate Word of God. In his Epistle, we have fellowship through the Incarnate Word of God.

The great yearning of the heart of God is that we should have fellowship with Him. The purpose of redemption is not just to free us from sin nor simply to get us to heaven but rather to fit us for eternal, unbroken, wonderful, personal, intimate fellowship with the living God Himself.

This is beyond all human comprehension. To accomplish this, God came in the Person of the Son for the purpose of redeeming out of the human family those men and women with whom He can have fellowship.

Sometimes people ask, “What about angels who have not sinned; why does God not have fellowship with them?”

This I do not know, but one thing I do know. When a person receives the Saviour, he is brought into an intimate relationship with God Himself. It may be that only those who are redeemed from sin by Jesus Christ can appreciate the grace of God, the compassion, the tenderness, the love of God. It is blessedly true that those who love Him may have this wonderful fellowship with Him.

Thank God, we can enjoy this fellowship now. Some people are waiting until they get to heaven for fellowship with its joy and peace. My friend, God wants us to have it now!

You may say, “I am so frail, so weak, and I fail God so much.”

That may be true. As we well know, sin and disobedience break our fellowship. We find this true even in human relationships, and it is certainly also true with the divine relationship.

However, John is dealing with the fact that even though we may fail God, He has made provision for forgiveness and cleansing and He gives to us the ground for that cleansing.

It would be well for us to remember that John gives us a declaration of Christ's accomplished work for us in the past, that is, His loving work of redemption (1 John 4:9,10).

He also informs us what Christ will do for us in the future. We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2). He reveals to us what Christ is doing for us now. Today, in heaven, He is praying for us.

If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (I John 2:1).

THE PURPOSE OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The purpose of the Epistle is threefold:

1. That your joy may be full.

1:4. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Remember, our Lord has spoken so that His joy might remain in us and that our joy may be made full (John 15:11).

It is not God's desire that we go around with a long face or with a holier-than-thou expression. God wants us to have full joy. Full joy is found in Christ and is dependent upon full fellowship with Christ, the Incarnate Word of God.

Most of our joys down here are tarnished because of weakness, failure, misunderstandings, and the sorrows of life. The world can have happiness which depends upon circumstances, but the world knows nothing of real joy.

Our joy depends upon our relationship and fellowship with God. Even in the midst of sorrow and affliction we can have real, real joy. This is a wonderful thing!

John writes these things unto us that our joy may be full.

2. That you sin not.

I John 2:1. My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Sinning is inconsistent in one who is in fellowship with God. John writes to us that we might be free from sinning. He does not say that we have no sin. In fact, he says in the first chapter that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we make Him a liar (1 John 1:8, 10). Because we do sin, provision has been made for us when we sin:

I John 2:12. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

God has made it possible for us to be free from sin by forgiveness and cleansing through the work of Christ. Yet, John's great desire for us is that we should not sin. God Himself empowers us by the Spirit of God so that day by day we may live lives glorifying to Him.

3. That you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God; in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

In the Gospel of John eternal life is granted by believing the declaration of God, and His Word is always sure. The believer may not feel it; the believer may not know much about it. But God has said it, and He always speaks the truth. He who believes in the Son has eternal life (John 3:36).

In the Epistle of John, the believer knows that he has eternal life because he experiences Christ day by day in his life through fellowship. Thus, we can say with John,

1:3. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Remember, the theme of the Epistle is fellowship with God.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to read through the whole Epistle today and keep this theme in mind while you read?

OUTLINE OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

I. The introduction to the Epistle (1 John 1:1-4)

Life manifested in the Incarnate Word
 Life experienced by the Apostles
 Testimony given by the Apostles
 The Apostles' desire for us
 The result of fellowship with God

II. Fellowship with God Who is Light (1 John 1:5-2:28)

The message (1:5)
 The test of our profession (1:6-8)
 The provision for restoration of fellowship (1:9, 10)
 The ground for fellowship with God (2:1,2)
 The evidence of fellowship with God (2:3-11)
 Obedience to His Word (3-5)
 Submission to His will (6-8)
 Love for the brethren (9-11)
 The place of fellowship is in the family (2:12-28)

- Declaration to the fathers (13, 14)
- Address to the young men (13, 14-17)
- Instructions to the little children (13, 18-28)

III. Fellowship with God Who is Righteous (1 John 2:29-4:6)

- The fact of God's righteousness (2:29)
- The encouragement for fellowship (3:1-3)
- The opposition to the fellowship (3:4-13)
- The evidence of the fellowship (3:14-18)
- The result of the fellowship (3:19-24)
 - Assurance in fellowship (19-21)
 - Assurance in prayer (22, 23)
 - Assurance because of our union with Him (24)
- The test of the fellowship (4:1-6)

IV. Fellowship with God Who is Love (1 John 4:7-5:5)

- Divine love manifested (4:7-10)
- The assurance of our union with Him (4:11-19)
- Love manifested in His children (4:20-5:5)

V. Divine Certainties and Assurances (1 John 5:6-20)

- Certainty of God's testimony (5:6-8)
- Certainty of eternal life (5:9-13)
- Certainty in prayer (5:18-20)
- Certainty in victory (5:18-20)

VI. The Conclusion (5:21)

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

It is usually true that in the introduction to a book we find the key to that book. In the first four verses of this Epistle we find the key.

1:1. What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--

1:2. and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

1:3. what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1:4. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

LIFE MANIFESTED IN THE INCARNATE WORD

“What was from the beginning . . .” It is very interesting to notice that in John’s Gospel we have this statement,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1,2).

In the third verse of that chapter we learn that all things came into being through Him (Jesus Christ), and this leads us back to the first verse of the Bible.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

In the first verse of this Epistle which we are studying, we read, "What was from the beginning." What are these three beginnings?

The word "beginning" in John's Gospel has to do with eternity, that which cannot be measured by time.

In the beginning was the Word.

The beginning of what?

Back just as far as one can go, before creation, He was there! The Word did not come into being, but was with God and was God. The Gospel of John starts with the pre-incarnate person of Jesus Christ.

In point of time, John 1:3 takes us back to Genesis 1:1, when, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Here is that time of creation when the worlds were made. John 1:3 tells us that all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. Genesis starts with God as the Creator, and John informs us that Jesus Christ is the Creator.

The Epistle of John starts with the Incarnate Word of God. "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen . . ."

This was the beginning of our Lord's life among men, as a Man in the midst of men.

This is comparable to the fourteenth verse in the first chapter of the gospel of John:

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

Therefore, both the Gospel and the Epistle of John give to us the revelation of the Incarnate Son of God.

In the Gospel of John, there can be no life, divine life, imparted to us apart from relationship with the Incarnate Son of God. In the Epistle of John, there can be no fellowship with God apart from the Incarnate Word of God.

LIFE EXPERIENCED BY THE APOSTLES

1:1. What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life . . .

In this verse we have the testimony of those who knew the Lord in person and who walked with Him when He was on earth. What an experience these men must have had! Have you ever stopped to think how wonderful it must have been?

They lived with the Saviour.

They accompanied Him for three-and-a-half years.

They traveled with Him, ate with Him, slept with Him.

They listened to His gracious words.

They heard His claims of deity and saw His miracles.

What a blessed sight to see Him heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, open the eyes of the blind, rebuke the fever.

They were with Him when He fed the hungry and when He stilled the storm. No wonder they cried out,

Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him? (Mark 4:41).

Consider, for example the feeding of the five thousand. He took the little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples.

Then, as the disciples gave the food to the multitude, it was multiplied. When they had fed the

multitude, each disciple had a basketful left (Matthew 14:15-21).

My, what an experience was theirs! We could spend much time thinking of the wonderful, miraculous things that happened in those three-and-a-half years. This is what John is talking about in this verse.

You absolutely could not fool these men. They knew!

1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled.

Whom did they see and hear? The Word of Life! He can be as real to you as He was to His disciples.

My friend, you may not know much about doctrine, but if you have received the Saviour, you can have a real experience with God, just as these men did.

You can experience His presence.

You can rejoice in His fellowship.

You can revel in His strength and power and can have full joy in Him.

You can know His tenderness, His love, His comfort.

I have often wondered how these men felt when they went with Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus.

You will recall that Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

Martha objected. "Don't do it! Leave it there because he is already in corruption, for he has been dead four days."

Jesus answered, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

When they had taken away the stone, He said, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Then said Jesus, Unbind him, and let him go (John 11:38-44).

The shocked apostles had just seen resurrection.

Remember this when you come to times of sorrow, when friends or family are taken home to God. You, too, will one day see resurrection; and you, too, can know what it is to experience the

very presence of the One who said, "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19). "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, shall live even if he dies" (John 11:25).

John knew Him as a Man among men. He knew Him as the risen Saviour. He was the one who had his head upon His bosom. He had heard, had seen, had touched the Word of Life. So, in this verse he is able to tell us what he really knows.

We too can know! I am sure that as we consider together the truths of this wonderful Epistle, the Word of Life will become more real and more precious to us.

TESTIMONY GIVEN BY THE APOSTLES

1:2. and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

The apostles not only experienced His presence, but they could not keep still about it.

Dear Peter could say to the Sanhedrin, "We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Even though they were threatened, they could not help but tell everything they knew about the Saviour. They were told to be quiet about this Jesus and not to talk about His being raised from the dead.

Peter said unto them,

Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19, 20).

This second verse of the Epistle tells us of their witness.

They told their friends.

They told everyone.

These converted commercial fishermen were transformed into flaming evangels of the gospel. They rejoiced in the fact that their Saviour lived; that the One with whom they had walked on earth before the cross had been raised from the dead; that He is the eternal son of God.

These disciples had heard our Saviour's last words before He ascended to the Father, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (Matthew 28:18-20).

My friend, all over the world today, hundreds upon hundreds of God's servants, live in shacks and grass huts, in the filth and dirt of some of those countries. Yet they have gone gladly, willing to sacrifice everything. What for? Because they love the Saviour and have experienced the blessedness of life in Him and cannot help but tell what they have seen and heard and know.

Perhaps you have belonged to a church all your life and you know all the doctrine of your church, but have not really experienced this life in Christ. Is this true of you? Or has the truth of the Word of God become a reality in your own heart and in your own life?

When John uses "we," he is speaking for all the Apostles who said, "We have heard . . . we have seen . . . and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

Can you say the same thing?

Do you remember the blind man in John 9? When the Pharisees spoke of Jesus, they said, *We know that this man is a sinner (John 9:24).*

The blind man replied,

Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see (John 9:25).

I can say to you today, my friend, as a personal testimony, that once I was blind but now I see. Once I was lost and now am found. Once I was afar off and now have been brought near. Once I was a child of wrath, but now I am a child of God. I can say with Paul,

I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

One day I shall stand in His presence conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). You cannot deny this! Not only does God's Word declare it, but my experience confirms it to my heart. His life has been manifested to me and in me. I know Him, and I want to tell you about Him. I want you to know Him, too.

Friend, do you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Are these things real to you? Or is it just simply doctrine—cold, cold doctrine? This can become a living reality in your life if you mean business with God. God means business with you.

Why did Jesus Christ become manifest in the flesh? So that you might have life: real life, eternal life, satisfying life, resurrection life!

Where can this life be found? It can be found in Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Incarnate Word of God. I plead with your heart today, using the words of our Saviour when He said,

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Again,

The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out (John 6:37).

It makes no difference what your past experience has been, or how bad, how weak, how trou-

bled you are now. His heart and His arms are always open to receive you. Why don't you come? This is a personal matter between you and Him. May you have that joy today!

THE APOSTLE'S DESIRE FOR US

1:3. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

“What we have seen and heard!” Notice, this is the third time he has mentioned it!

“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you.”

What for?

“That you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

We are telling you that which we have seen and heard so that you might have the same intimacy with God that we have.

My Christian friend, do you know that the great yearning of God's heart is for your fellowship?

How much of your time do you give to God? Sunday morning? Sunday school, maybe? Do you actually get into the Word of God and learn what He has to say to you? Do you have fellowship with Him in His Word? This is what John is talking about in this third verse.

Having spoken of his experience in verse one, and of his testimony in verse two, he now comes to his desire in verse three. John says that he is ministering the truth to us in order to bring us not only into relationship with the living God, (stated so clearly in John's Gospel), but also into intimate fellowship with Him.

Now, I want to stop here a moment, because it is difficult for me to put into words how I feel about this verse. John is saying to us, “We are

preaching and teaching, ministering and sacrificing so that you might clearly understand and enter into this same fellowship with us.”

John, what is this fellowship? It is true that we are brought into relationship with God through faith in Christ, but here, John is pleading that we may know in our experience day by day, this fellowship with God.

The enjoyment of spiritual life can come only as we walk in fellowship with God. A Spirit-filled life is the enjoyment of divine life; it is that life of fellowship. There is no higher experience for a believer, either on earth or in heaven, than the experience of personal, intimate fellowship with the living, sovereign, eternal God. The most amazing thing is that the grace of God has made this provision. His grace has redeemed us.

But what is the purpose of all this redemption? God is going to have a people who will appreciate His love, His grace, His kindness, His very heart, and with whom He can have fellowship.

There are examples of this in the Old Testament:

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11).

Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face (Deuteronomy 34:10).

This is the great desire of God’s heart!
God had asked David to seek His face.

“When Thou didst say, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to Thee, ‘Thy face, O LORD, I shall seek’” (Psalm 27:8).

Notice that the request comes first from God.

“David, I want your fellowship.”

David answers, “That’s just what I want, Lord; I want Your fellowship.”

This word “fellowship” carries with it the thought of partnership. It is like building a home with your beloved. You come to live together in that home, and your life is one of loving partnership. Fellowship with God is being a partner with

Him in His life, in His purpose, in His love, in all He is.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Paul asks,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? . . . Do you not know that we shall judge angels? . . . Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3, 19).

He says,

We are God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9).

If we know these things, then how should we live among men?

We are partakers with God, not only in His life, but in His purpose and in His will. This is to say, we are partners with God in His program of all that He is doing on earth and all that He is going to do in eternity. We are on "God's team" and therefore we must walk in union with God. We must walk in fellowship with Him.

So then, what is God's purpose for men? It is that men might be redeemed. God is building a church, and He has called us to have a place as partners with Him in the building of His church. This is what John is talking about.

Allow me to paraphrase, "What we have heard and what we have seen, we are declaring to you that you might have partnership with us. Our partnership is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

My, what a calling! Partners with God! No wonder Paul could say that we are to walk according to the calling with which we have been called (Ephesians 4:1).

- **Jesus said, I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you (John 14:20).**
- **He who has the Son has the life (1 John 5:12).**
- **We may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world (1 John 4:17).**

We are not going to wait until we get to heaven to have eternal life or to have a relationship with God or to have fellowship with God. We have this relationship, this union with God, right now, and we experience this life by entering into fellowship with God. No wonder the next verse goes on to speak of our joy!

THE RESULT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

1:4. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

The source of our joy is in God Himself, because of our relationship with Him. It thrills our hearts to know that we are the children of One who is God. The nature of our joy is having fellowship with Him. The extent of our joy is that it should be full. Full joy is God's desire for every one of His children.

- **“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11).**
- **“Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full” (John 16:24).**
- **“But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves” (John 17:13).**
- **The witness of John the Baptist concerning Jesus was, “This joy of mine has been made full” (John 3:29).**

Christian friend, are you experiencing full joy? Perhaps you say, “No, I'm in sorrow. I'm distressed because of my own frailty.”

One man told me that he had more joy before he was a Christian than after he became a Christian. No, friend, there is no real joy before one becomes a Christian. That is happiness. One may have been happy because of circumstances. When the circumstances were good, there was happiness; when the circumstances were bad, there was un-

happiness. I am not talking about that kind of up-and-down experience. I am talking about a joy that is God-given.

- **These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you (John 15:11).**
- **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you (John 14:27).**
- **Because I live, you shall live also (John 14:19).**
- **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).**

Jesus is my joy, my peace, my life, my righteousness. Circumstances do not affect this God-given joy!

This does not mean that we are always going to be hilarious, or be putting on a false front, or be trying to make-believe that we are happy. Instead, there comes a settledness, a quiet satisfaction, an assurance, a peace, a joy that is beyond the understanding of men. The circumstances of life do not affect this joy or this peace.

John is saying, "This is why I am writing to you, that your joy may be full."

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHO IS LIGHT

- FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD
 WHO IS RIGHTEOUS
- FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD
 WHO IS LOVE

I John 1:5 ¶ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

We have come now to the first main division of the book. There are three statements concerning the nature of God in this Epistle:

God is light; that is, God is absolute in holiness.

God is righteous; that is, He is right in everything He does, and every act of His is right.

God is love; that is, love characterizes the energy of His nature toward men.

The first of these statements is that *God is light* and in Him is no trace of darkness. We read of our Saviour in 1 Timothy 6:16,

“Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.”

This is God’s absolute holiness in character.

God, being light, must reveal Himself. Remember that in Exodus 19:9 at the giving of the law the Lord said,

Behold, I shall come to you in a thick cloud.

The people were full of fear and trembled. But now, God has come out into the light!

The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining (1 John 2:8).

God has revealed Himself. He has come out into the light in Christ Jesus, who has purged our sins, who has removed the barrier between God and man, who has rent the veil.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2).

However, we find that when He came, men refused the light. In the Gospel of John we read,

In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.

He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” (John 1:6-9).

Do you mean to tell me that men were in such moral darkness, such spiritual darkness, that God had to send someone to bear witness of the Light? That is true. They would not hear the witness nor would they turn to the One who is the true Light, so they remained in darkness.

The purpose of light is to dispel darkness. When light shines, the darkness is gone. Men were in darkness concerning God, but He came into the world to shine in our hearts,

“to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

He came that we might know Him; that we might know truly who He is and what we are; that we might know His person, the One who is “full of

grace and truth" (John 1:14); that we might know His purpose in redeeming us, in giving us the gift of eternal life and bringing us into relationship and fellowship with Himself; that He might bring us "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We are not now in darkness, but we are in Him in whom is no darkness at all.

"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8).

THE TEST OF OUR PROFESSION

If we claim to be in fellowship with God, certainly we must be willing to be tested. If we come to believe certain truths and consider ourselves to be a certain type of person, then we will prove it by the way we live and walk. So we read:

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

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

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

Many people say that they can understand how we can have fellowship with a God who is love but cannot understand how we can have fellowship with a God who is absolute in holiness, with One who is absolutely righteous in His character and in His acts, with One who is light and in whom is no darkness at all.

Listen, friend, the most amazing truth of all time is that our Saviour left the glory and came to earth for the purpose of preparing a people with whom He could have fellowship. The barrier between God and man has been removed and God is accessible.

“Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

This is a wonderful fact. But we need to ask ourselves some questions from these first passages in 1 John. Do I draw near? Do I walk in fellowship with Him?

The following verses present to us the test of our profession. Notice:

“If we say” in verse six

“If we walk” in verse seven

“If we say” in verse eight

“If we confess” in verse nine

“If we say” in verse ten

“The one who says” in chapter two, verses 4, 6, 9.

Christianity is more than doctrine; it is more than just talking about truth. A Christian is one in whom truth lives. There can be no real life at all until we are in right relationship with the Saviour. And the truth does not live in us unless we are in fellowship with Him. If we are in fellowship with Him and if we make a profession of such fellowship, then we will be tested.

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

John puts it into very simple language. If we claim to belong to the kingdom of light and claim to have fellowship with God but are walking in darkness, then we certainly are not telling the truth. It is impossible to walk in darkness when we are in right relationship with the One who is light. This would be an absolute inconsistency.

Also, we will notice, as we read the Epistle, that John talks about light and darkness; and there is no gray zone between. We are either in

light or in the kingdom of darkness. We are either children of God or we are the children of the devil.

Do you remember that amazing passage written by Paul in Colossians?

“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:12, 13).

This translation into a new kingdom occurred the moment you and I accepted the Saviour. Every real Christian is in the kingdom of light, has been removed from the kingdom of darkness, and has been translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. We are no longer in the dark.

God no longer sees us in the kingdom of darkness. If we have received Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God declares us to be in His kingdom. But if we say that we are in fellowship with God who is light and are living in darkness, we are not telling the truth. We cannot for one moment live in the kingdom of darkness after He has translated us into the kingdom of light

I think Paul had this same thought in mind in his writing:

“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

Whether one is a Jew or Gentile does not make any difference, for in Christ Jesus “neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Galatians 6:15).

We are a new creation! Paul restates this in the letter to Corinth where he is speaking of the risen, glorified Christ and of any man who is in this Christ, this risen Christ.

Though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore if any

man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:16, 17).

This is the position into which God has placed His people. This does not mean that we will not fail God. We will discuss that in a moment. Even in our failure, we are still in the kingdom of light. This is where we live.

John clearly states that a person is either in the light or in the dark. If we say that we are living in the kingdom of light, in God's kingdom, in fellowship with God, and we walk in darkness and live like those who are in the dark, then we are liars.

He states the same truth in the second chapter. He is speaking about the unsaved person when he writes that

The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. . . . But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1 John 2:9, 11).

Is it not wonderful to know that when you trusted the Saviour, God took you out of the kingdom of darkness and put you into the kingdom of God's dear Son? We are no longer seen in sin but in Christ. We are no longer in darkness, but in light. We are no longer under judgment, but are righteous in Christ.

However, we must face the fact that Christians do fail God. Christians do sin. In fact, verse eight tells us that

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

Let us never fool ourselves. People who boast about not sinning are actually proud of what they are or think they are. And what is pride but the root sin? We do fail God, every one of us.

This passage is not talking about how we walk but where we walk. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, and if we fail God, then the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. He keeps on keeping us clean.

Remember, this is talking about those who are walking in the light, not those who are in the kingdom of darkness. This is talking about God's people. Where do we walk? We walk in the light. Do we always walk in fellowship with the One who is light? I am sorry to say, "No!" But when we do fail, we are restored because the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

There is a difference between relationship to Christ and fellowship with Him. Here John is not talking about relationship with God. That has been settled forever. There is only one place where a Christian can walk and that is in the light, in the kingdom of God.

Here he is talking about fellowship with God who is light. The Christian who fails God breaks fellowship with God. This does not take him out of the kingdom of God. It does not change his position before God. He is still a member of God's family.

God, who is absolute in holiness, has prepared a people who are able to come into His presence.

It is a marvelous, wonderful, glorious thing that God has taken men and women who had rebelled against Him, who had been ungodly, who had been sinners, and has forgiven them, justified them, translated them out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son forever.

In this kingdom of His Son, we who have been redeemed do still fail God because our bodies are not yet glorified. However, our lives are no longer characterized by sin.

1:8. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

Indeed, we do not deceive anybody else, certainly not those who live around us.

Some people say, "I do not sin. I only make mistakes."

Well, my friend, let us label sin as sin. Let us not try to rationalize it away. That which is out of the will of God, which does not conform to the very character of God, is sin. 1 John 3:4 tells us that sin is lawlessness.

Let us remember that the cleansing is for those who are walking in the light. Did you ever stop to think that those who are told to confess their sin are those who are in the kingdom of light, who are in touch with the Saviour? The man who is not in Christ Jesus, who is in the world, who walks in the kingdom of darkness, is the man who does not care whether or not he is in sin.

When one points out to such a person that he is a sinner, his answer is likely to be, "I'm just as good as you are!"

Of course, that may be true. But is that what he is going to tell God?

Can he stand in the presence of God with such a poor excuse? The man out of Christ does not think about his sin with great concern. The really concerned man is the one who has come to the Saviour. The more one knows the Saviour, the more one realizes his own weakness and failure. Permit me to give some examples of this from the Scriptures.

Job is the oldest book in the Bible and is possibly the oldest book ever written. Job lived around 1500 to 2000 B.C. In the first two chapters of that book God is talking with Satan concerning Job.

He said to Satan, "Have you seen my servant Job? He is a good man. He loves the good and hates the evil. You cannot find a flaw in Job."

Then God began to deal with Job. Job was good, but he was also self-righteous. When he walked down the streets, the young men would bow before him. When he sat in the gates of the city, everyone had respect for him. They listened to his counsel.

Yet God permitted Job to go through a terrible time of testing. He was smitten with a loathsome disease. His philosophical friends came and sat down with him and spent seven days just sitting and weeping because of the awful condition of Job. Through many of the chapters of Job, these

friends tried to reason with him about his condition. Then Elihu, the servant of God, came; and he could not get anywhere with Job. Finally God came on the scene and met Job.

Do you know what Job said when he had seen the Lord?

“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5,6).

You do not find an unsaved man saying that! This is a good man. What made him say it? He had had a glimpse of Christ. The trouble today is that people have never seen Christ in all His beauty and righteousness. Most people have dethroned Christ. They make Him a teacher or a good man or a moralist with wonderful, ethical instructions. They will not give Him His rightful place as the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. The result is that they have no conviction of sin.

Consider Isaiah who was possibly one of the most astounding men of his day. This man prophesied during the reign of four kings. He went into the presence of the kings of Israel and felt perfectly at ease. He was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, the prophet of redemption. Yet, listen to him in chapter six:

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him . . . and one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory’” (Isaiah 6:1-3).

What a wonderful picture. And then this man cried out,

Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Isaiah 6:5).

What opened Isaiah's eyes to his condition? Seeing the Lord. What people know more about sin and the awfulness of sin than those who walk in the light? The very light of God shines into the darkness of men's hearts and consciences.

There is nothing in the whole book of Daniel that is derogatory about Daniel, the prophet. In fact, he is called a comely person. Yet, after he saw the Lord, he said,

My natural color (comeliness, KJV) turned to a deathly pallor (corruption, KJV) (Daniel 10:8).

Consider Peter in Luke, chapter five. The Lord was preaching to the crowd from the boat and He said to Peter, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

Peter answered, "Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets." In obedience to Christ they caught a harvest of fish. Then what did Peter do? He fell down at the knee of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:1-8).

What moved Peter to say that? He had seen the revelation of the Son of God.

What I am trying to get to your heart is this: When we have seen the Lord, when we really know Him, then we recognize our own sinfulness and our own inability to do the things we should do. We realize the need to walk continually in fellowship with Him.

When we do walk in the light and are in fellowship with the One who is light, then we will have fellowship one with another. And the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin. Why should we need cleansing if we are sinless and without weakness and failure?

Again I come back to it. When we accepted the Saviour, we were transformed into the children of God and took our place in the kingdom of light.

This is where we are. This is where we live. This is where we walk. But there are times when we fail God. This breaks our fellowship with God

who is light—not the relationship but the fellowship.

When this happens, we can know that He has made provision for us. We rejoice in the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on keeping us clean. When our fellowship with Him is broken, He will restore and cleanse us.

May you live in wonderful fellowship with Him today!

THE PROVISION FOR THE RESTORATION OF FELLOWSHIP

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

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

When the Lord Jesus died to put away our sins, He did a perfect work. He made it possible for us to come into right relationship with God, to become His children, to be pardoned every sin, and to be fitted for His presence. This relationship cannot be broken. Even though we fail and are weak and stumbling, we are still the objects of His love.

“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1).

The great yearning of God’s heart is that His people, His children, might have real fellowship with Him. I love to watch school children run home to Mother and see her take them in her arms and hug them. I have wondered, how do we, the children of God, treat the living God who redeemed us?

We boast about being His children, but how much fellowship do we have with Him? How much do we seek to please His heart? Paul’s hope was that Christ should be “exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

In verse eight it was stated that the reality of sinfulness may be denied by some. "If we say that we have no sin . . ." There are those who say there is no principle of sin in a person and that sin is just a hallucination of the mind.

When we read verse nine, however, we must admit the reality of sin along with Isaiah and Job and Daniel and Peter. We admit that Christians do sin. We also accept the divine provision for restoration to fellowship. Walking in the light brings a consciousness of guilt which breaks the fellowship.

We cannot divorce verse seven from verse nine. In verse seven, the very walking in the light of God's Word or in the light of His Person reveals what we are. We acknowledge the fact that we do sin and that God is righteous. Then in verse nine, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is not "faithful and merciful" nor even "faithful and loving" but "faithful and just (righteous) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Let me assure you of one thing. God will keep His Word! When we confess our sins, we are forgiven and cleansed.

This is different from the way we entered into relationship with God. At the cross we received forgiveness. The moment we became Christians we were forgiven every sin. He did not ask us to confess our sin. He asked us to receive the Saviour. The moment we took Jesus Christ as our Saviour, on the ground of His wonderful grace, He forgave our sin.

- **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE" (Ephesians 1:7).**
- **"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ (FOR CHRIST'S SAKE-KJV) also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).**

- **“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE” (1 John 2:12).**

We are forgiven according to the riches of His grace, for Christ’s sake, for His name’s sake. This is true for all God’s people!

However, restoration to fellowship is dependent upon confession. There are Christians who say that it is all right to sin over and over and to go on sinning because all they need to do is confess. Let us not fool ourselves. That is not true confession.

Honest confession includes a sorrow for what we have done and a desire to do what is right. If we feel that we can continue to sin because we can confess and be forgiven, we have no conception of the heart and character of God. We have no understanding of the absolute righteousness and holiness of the One with whom we have fellowship. Our fellowship is with God who is light!

Listen, my friend, if you say that you can confess your sin, be forgiven, and go right on sinning, then not only do you fail to understand the holiness of God, but you do not have an appreciation of what He has done for you nor do you understand your position in Him. You can be sure that if you are a child of God, you will be disciplined by Him.

“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines” (Hebrews 12:6).

Why? That we might yield “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).

Please, be honest and real in your confession. When you confess your sin, name the thing which has broken the fellowship. Don’t get down beside your bed at night and say, “Dear Lord, forgive me for my sins today.” This is not true confession. When we confess, we should tell the Lord the thing that we have done and ask His forgiveness and cleansing.

When we have sinned against someone else, we should also go to them.

Keep short accounts with God.

Do not wait until Sunday morning to confess a sin.

Do not wait until the awareness of wrong-doing wears off.

Even Abraham, the friend of God, reaped the fruitage of unjudged sin in his life. We cannot get away from the fact that God must judge sin.

We may say, "But I am a child of God."

Well and good! A child of God may be out of fellowship with God, for sin breaks fellowship. How often, then, should we confess? As often as we sin. When we confess, we are forgiven and cleansed.

Is it not true that oftentimes, after we confess our sin, we go on about our work and we are still thinking about the sin that we have committed? I have experienced this and probably you have, too. The result is that it is the sin which is on our mind.

Soon we find ourselves doing the same thing again. Why not believe what He has said?

1:9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and TO CLEANSE US from all unrighteousness.

The moment we do this, our fellowship is restored. Then let us really believe this and turn our thought from ourselves and our sin to Jesus Christ, the Saviour.

It is possible for a believer to live every day in fellowship with Christ. We may fail God, but we come to the Lord sometimes with a broken heart. We don't even know why we did what we did. A man came to me for counseling, and he had done something that really shocked me.

I asked, "Why in the world did you do it?"

He answered, "Mr. Mitchell, I don't know why I did it. I am so ashamed and sorry. I want to be forgiven and cleansed."

I tell you, it is a wonderful thing to go with a man in that condition, one who really means busi-

ness with God, to the throne of grace to be cleansed. God has made known to us the wonderful provision for fellowship with Him and when we meet the condition, He will keep His promise. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When you realize that something has come between you and your Lord, do not go another hour out of fellowship with Him. You are not waiting for God. He is waiting for you. Confess your sin and be cleansed. He knows all about it. He is your Father. Then enjoy the day in fellowship with Him. It will delight the heart of God, and it will fill you with great joy.

Let us turn to the Old Testament for a wonderful illustration of the truth of God's provision for the restoration of fellowship. After the Israelites had come out of Egypt, they suffered thirst; and they cried unto Moses and Aaron, who, in turn, cried unto God.

God said,

"Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink" (Exodus 17:6).

Moses took the rod of God and smote the rock, and water came forth, life-giving water, for the people who were thirsty. Nothing is said about the condition of the people except that they were thirsty, and God met their need in a very remarkable way (Exodus 17:1-7).

In the Book of Numbers, chapter 20, verses 7 and 8, they were thirsty again, and they were ready to kill Moses; so Moses came before the Lord.

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock."

Now, mark the change. You speak to the rock. You remember how Moses came to the people and said,

“Listen now, you rebels; shall WE bring forth water for you out of this rock?” And he smote the rock twice. The water came out, but Moses came under the judgment of God (Numbers 20:2-13).

Why did he?

What had he done wrong?

Let us turn to the New Testament to see.

1 Corinthians 10 reiterates the history of Israel, and Paul writes that

“they were drinking from a spiritual Rock which followed them; and the Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

In other words, the rock in Exodus 17 is a type of Christ, who was smitten for us. Because Christ was smitten for us, we receive that life-giving water. That is, when we come to the One who died for us and rose again and when we accept Him as our Saviour, then we are cleansed and forgiven every sin. We receive life eternal.

But now, even as Christians, we sin. What shall we do?

Go back to the cross and be saved over again?

No!

Christ dies for our sins only once.

We need to speak to the Rock. God had told Moses to speak to the rock and it would give forth its water. We are to confess our sins. We go to the throne.

We do not go back to the cross.

In the Book of Hebrews we are encouraged,

“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Come with boldness!

To whom is this written?

To those Christians who are in need of mercy. Who needs mercy? The Christians who fail. To these He says, "Come, do not be afraid. Confess your sins. Speak to the Rock."

The Rock was smitten for us once—once forever. He perfectly completed the task He came to do. He will never again go to the cross. He gave His life once for all. Notice how the following verses emphasize this:

- **"But now ONCE at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).**
- **"But He, having offered ONE sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).**
- **"For the death that He died, He died to sin, ONCE FOR ALL; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6:10).**

I would like to speak of this from a different viewpoint. Riches of grace are ours because of Christ's sacrifice for us. We are saved according to the riches of His grace.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

Riches of grace proceed from the cross. Now that we are believers, our daily needs are met according to His riches in glory.

Paul prayed that we might be made powerfully strong according to the riches of His glory (Ephesians 3:16,17).

Again, in Philippians 4:19,

And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

It is by the riches of grace that we are saved. It is by the riches of glory that our present needs are met. We do not go back to the cross to be saved over again. We do confess our sins to the One who is now on the throne, and He has promised to forgive and cleanse.

Let us consider one more example. In John 13 our Lord began to wash the disciples' feet and Peter said, "Lord, You shall never wash my feet."

The Lord answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

"Well, Lord, if it means that, why don't You just wash me completely?"

The Lord's amazing answer was,

He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you. For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, Not all of you are clean (John 13:4-11).

At the cross we were bathed. His present ministry is to keep us clean.

If you have accepted the Saviour, and yet your life has been robbed of joy, of blessing, and of peace, you cannot go back to the cross. You have access to the throne of God. Speak to the One who is on the throne.

Tell Him about your sin, your weakness, your frailty, your failure. He will forgive and cleanse and will fill your life with joy and peace as you walk in fellowship with Him.

Let us be occupied with Him! Let us live for His glory! Let us be ambitious to be found pleasing to God!

THE GROUND FOR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

I John 2:1. My little children, I am writing these things to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2:2. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

A problem has been raised in the previous chapter. If we say we have fellowship with Him and we walk in darkness, then we are lying (1 John 1:6). If we say that we have no sin, then we are deceiving ourselves and not telling the truth (1 John 1:8). If

we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar (1 John 1:10).

Since sin is universal, it would seem that it must be inevitable that we sin; and so we try to excuse ourselves. Even we who are Christians may say that we can't help it when we sin because everybody sins.

John certainly does not excuse sin. Sin is a terrible thing! It was sin that caused the Saviour to go to the cross to die for men. It was sin that took men away from God. It was sin that brought a barrier between God and man. Christ came to give his life for us that He might remove that barrier.

It is now possible for us to come into the very presence of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died to put away our sins.

When we once understand the greatness of Christ's sacrifice for us, the fullness of His pardon, and the excellence of all that He has made possible for us, then we will see the awfulness of sin and we will not want to continue in sin.

2:1. My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin.

Sinning is inconsistent in one who is walking in the light.

In this chapter John is pleading for moral fitness, for day by day walking with God. May I remind you that he is not dealing with judicial fitness, which was forever settled at the cross. Our position before God cannot be changed. He is dealing here with the matter of fellowship with God.

Again, I repeat it, because I want it clearly in your minds. We have bodies that have desires and lusts that are contrary to the character and will of God. Even though we yearn for the things of God, we do things that we should not do. Paul says,

“For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” (Romans 7:15).

So we have a real problem with these bodies that are not yet glorified.

God has made the provision for our restoration into fellowship with Him, and this was stated in chapter one in verses nine and ten. If we confess, He forgives and cleanses. The ground for this fellowship is the work of Christ.

May I remind you that our Lord's work for us is threefold. He has finished one work at the cross and in resurrection when He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has made possible the redemption of men because He satisfied the very character of God and reconciled men to God. He has made it possible for God to declare righteous every sinner who believes in Jesus Christ. On the cross He said, "It is finished." This work has been completed.

In the future, our Lord will do another work. He will return to the earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will first judge the nations and Israel. Then He will set up His glorious kingdom and reign for a thousand years on earth. All nations will be under his banner and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The nations shall learn war no more, and He will arbitrate between the nations (Isaiah 11).

In the present, the Lord Jesus has a ministry at the right hand of God. The entire Book of Hebrews deals with our Saviour on the throne of grace as our High Priest. He is our Representative, our Intercessor, our Forerunner, our Refuge, our Hope—all that we need.

This is stated in Hebrews where God is set forth in His governmental dealings with His people.

In the Epistle of John, we learn that He prays for us in our frailty. This is another aspect of Christ's present ministry—the advocacy of Christ in making provision for His people when they sin. One of the results of His advocacy for us when we sin is that the fellowship in the family is restored.

2:1. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Notice, it doesn't say that if any man repent, he has an Advocate; nor if any man promises to be good, he has an Advocate. If any man sin, he has an Advocate. He is not talking to the unsaved. The unsaved man needs the work of the cross. He needs a Saviour. This is speaking to the Christian who has received eternal life as a gift and now wants to walk in fellowship with God. The believer who sins is the one who needs an Advocate.

We do not read in Scripture that we have an Advocate with God, nor do we read that we have a High Priest in the Father. In the Book of Hebrews, God is set forth in His governmental dealing with His people, and Christ is revealed in His present ministry before God as our High Priest. We need a High Priest because we are here in frailty and weakness.

In the Epistle of John, we are taught that the Father and those who believe in His Son are in a family relationship, and fellowship is a family matter.

We have an Advocate with the Father! He effectively pleads our cause before the Father. He does this pleading on the ground that He has already and still continues to satisfy perfectly the demands of divine holiness. He is the abiding propitiation.

Now we come to the question: When does He start to plead our cause?

When we sin?

Before we sin?

After we confess?

When is He our Advocate?

My friend, He is always our Advocate. He is continually pleading our cause. Let me illustrate this with our Lord's advocacy for Peter.

In Luke 22, the Lord said,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31,32).

Notice that Jesus did not pray that he would not sin or that he would not deny Him. He had already talked to the Father and had pleaded his cause so that his faith would not fail. Peter did not know himself, and he replied, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33). Peter is saying, "You can surely count on me. I know the rest of them here may fail you, but you can count on me. I'll die for You." And Peter meant every word of it.

When we think of Peter sinning, we think of his denying his Lord with oaths and curses. We must remember that it didn't start there. It started with self-confidence. Peter had confidence in the flesh.

In the Garden of Gethsemane our Lord had asked Peter, James, and John to watch with Him; but when He came back to them, He found Peter sleeping (Matthew 26:36-46).

It is always easier to sleep than it is to pray. When the crowd came to take the Lord captive in the garden, Peter took out his sword and cut off a fellow's ear. The Lord had just demonstrated His power by declaring who He is, and they had all fallen backwards to the ground. That was a manifestation of the power of God. But then Peter took out his sword and manifested the flesh (John 18:1-11).

After the soldiers had taken Jesus, Peter followed afar off. In the palace of the high priest he sat down with the enemies of Christ and warmed himself at their fire. Then he denied his Lord three times (John 18:12-27); Luke 22:54-62).

If we note the steps in Peter's downfall, we find that he was boastful. He slept when he should have been praying. He acted in the energy of the flesh when he cut off the ear of Malchus. He followed afar off. He sat down with the enemies of Christ. He denied the Saviour, adding his oaths and curses.

Then the Lord turned and looked on Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. He did not lose his love for the Saviour. He did not lose his faith in the Saviour.

Peter failed miserably, but his faith did not fail. Peter's faith did not fail because of the advocacy of Christ, our Lord. He had pleaded Peter's cause, that his faith fail not; and, if you tell me that Peter lost his faith, then I must tell you that the prayers of Christ were not efficacious. They were not enough. No, you must confess with me that if Jesus Christ is God's Son, the righteous One, then His prayer must avail for His people. In fact, I am convinced that if it were not for His prayers for the people of God, not one could stand. Not for a moment! He effectively pleads our cause. He never tires of pleading our cause.

Do you realize that we have two Advocates? We have Jesus Christ in heaven as our Advocate, pleading our cause before the Father so that our fellowship might be restored and that we might be filled with joy and with blessing (1 John 2:1,2). Also, the Spirit of God is an Advocate, dwelling in us, pleading His cause in us (Romans 8:26,27).

How wonderful it is that God has supplied three deterrents to sin. He has given us His Word.

1) Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee (Psalm 119:11).

2) You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you (John 15:3).

3) And He has given us His Holy Spirit, indwelling us to lead and guide and direct us in our living (John 16:13).

He longs to have us know and obey His Word and to have us submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He has given us an Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that our Advocate with the Father is "Jesus Christ, the righteous." He is the sinless One. Here He is not called Jesus Christ, the merciful One or the loving One or the compassionate One or the tender One. No, the issue here is sin—sin as opposed to righteousness. When you and I sin, we have a righteous God involved. How then, can a righteous God forgive us our sin? Here is the answer.

2:1. We have an advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS:

2:2. and HE is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Did you ever fall in love with Christ? If you love the Saviour, do you know that you stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ? God never sees us apart from His Son. He always sees us clothed in the garments of His righteousness. What a peace that brings us. What a Saviour!

2:2. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

The Greek word for “propitiation” is the same word used for “mercy-seat.” It signifies that which Christ has become for the sinner. On the cross He met the demands of God’s holiness and righteousness. He is what the mercy-seat was in the Old Testament, namely, the place of meeting between God and men. John is telling us in these verses that Christ is our Advocate, not only because He is the righteous One, but also because He is the abiding propitiation for our sin.

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:24-26).

When Christ died on the cross, He vindicated the righteous character of God; He perfectly satisfied all the divine character. In other words, the eternal God in all His holiness and justice and righteousness was perfectly and completely satisfied with what Jesus Christ, His Son, accom-

plished on the cross. This is God's side of Calvary. Our side is to be redeemed and reconciled.

The important issue is that God is satisfied with the work of His Son. It is not our value of the blood of Christ that saves us and cleanses us. It is the great value that God has put upon the blood of His Son. God is satisfied! Christ is the propitiation for our sins. This is ever the basis of our Lord's advocacy. He pleads our cause on the ground that He has already satisfied the divine character of God for us.

2:2. He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

There is sufficient value in the work of Christ, who satisfied the character of God, for the whole world to be saved if they would but come to Him. A complete work was accomplished at the cross. Divine righteousness was perfectly and fully satisfied once for all. This is the statement in Romans. Here, in the Epistle of John, the emphasis is the abiding propitiation. As the righteous One, He pleads and He is ever efficacious because He is the One who has removed the righteous judgment of God against men. His sacrifice is inexhaustible and eternally valid.

Propitiation is not something we must feel or experience; it is a fact to be accepted. Relationship is established with the eternal, righteous God the moment we receive the Saviour. This salvation is declared in the Gospel of John and explained in the Book of Romans. Here, in the Epistle of John, he is talking about our fellowship. We are responsible for our sin, but He is the One who has made provision for us to be cleansed.

After we have accepted the Saviour, our relationship with God never changes. We become the children of God for all eternity. Our standing before God never changes. We stand before Him as His redeemed children, clothed in all the righteousness of Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

However, our fellowship with Him does change. We may be in fellowship with God today

and may fail Him tomorrow. In His wonderful grace He has made provision for this failure. Christ is our Advocate with the Father. He pleads our cause on the ground of His all-sufficient sacrifice for our sin (1 John 4:9, 10).

God has so graciously and wondrously manifested His love for us.

Do you realize that we have been redeemed, not primarily that we might change the world, but that we might walk in fellowship with God? This is the great longing of His heart.

Abraham walked with God as a friend. He is called the "friend of God" in 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23.

What did he do for the world? He pleaded with God for men (Genesis 18:23-33 and Genesis 20:17, 18).

Just so, when we walk with God, we have weapons so powerful that the armies of the earth cannot withstand them. We have the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

We have the privilege of praying "at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

Fellowshipping with God is simply walking with Him whatever and wherever our jobs may be. It is magnifying Him in all that we do.

Won't you rejoice today that God is completely satisfied with the work of His son?

Won't you revel in the love of the Saviour and enjoy His fellowship?

THE EVIDENCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

There is a question that needs to be answered. How can I know when I am in fellowship with this God who is light, who is absolute in holiness, in whom is no darkness at all? Feelings and ecstatic experiences are transient and unreliable. We must turn to the Word of God to find the answer. We find that there are three things that characterize

the life of a Christian when he is really walking in fellowship with God.

1. **The first evidence is obedience to His Word.**

2:3. And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

2:4. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

2:5. But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.

Here we have a statement of experiential knowledge. That is to say, our experience in fellowship with God is tested. If our relationship to God is a real relationship and if it is a personal fellowship with God who is light, then it will be manifested by obedience to His Word. In fact, perfect obedience is the evidence of a perfect love for him.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him (John 14:21, 23).

Our perfect example in this is the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do (John 14:31).**
- **For I do always do the things that are pleasing to Him (John 8:29).**
- **My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work (John 4:34).**

This was the great desire of the heart of Christ.

We must admit that even though we want to obey the Word of God, we fail so often. God knows, and we all recognize, that we are living in bodies that are frail and that fail God. Sin comes to us through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life. We see things, we hear things, we do things, we desire things that break our fellowship with God. Words pop out of our mouth without any thinking, and we are amazed at what we said. We are amazed at some of the things we do because we do not want to do them.

The unsaved man, the one who is not a Christian, does not feel that way. The man of the world does what he wants to do. He has no desire for the Word of God. He has no desire to obey the Word of God. We who are Christians have a yearning for the fellowship of God. We want to serve the Lord. We want to do the Lord's will. We want to be found obedient to Him. That very thing, my friend, is one of the evidences that we belong to Him.

2:5. But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.

When we accept the Saviour, there is planted in our hearts a great desire for God, for His fellowship, for His Word. Even though we are weak and often fail, yet there is in our hearts the great desire to do the will of God.

His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalm 1:2).

If obedience to the Word of God is not the desire of your heart, then, my friend, I would like to ask you a question. Have you really accepted Christ as your personal Saviour? Have you come into right relationship with Him?

Obedience to His Word is the measure of our love for Christ and is also the evidence of our fellowship and union with Him. This is experiential knowledge, something we know. It is not a theory, nor a doctrine, nor some theology which men may teach; but it is a reality in our own life. God has provided the possibility of personal, intimate fellowship with Himself. This is why He sent His Son. He redeemed man, and He removed the barrier between man and God so that man could have a relationship with God and also have intimate fellow-

ship with Him. It is possible for a Christian on earth to walk in fellowship with God day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. In fact, the whole Gospel of Luke tells us how Jesus as a man walked in continual moment-by-moment fellowship with His Father. This fellowship can also be ours. What is the evidence of such fellowship? Obedience to His Word!

Is this what you want to do?

2. The second evidence of fellowship with God is submission to His will.

2:6. The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

2:7. Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

2:8. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

Allow me to paraphrase verse 6: “He who confesses or says that he is in fellowship with God ought to walk even as Christ walked.” Lest someone should misunderstand what John is writing, let me state that he does not say that if we are abiding in Him, we will do the same things that He did. He does not say that. He does say that we will walk as He walked.

The “old commandment” in verse seven is found in John 13 where Jesus says,

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

This was a “new commandment” which He gave them while He walked among them, but now it has become the “old commandment.” Then what is the “new commandment” which John mentions in verse six? It is absolute submission to the will of

the Father. If I say that I am in fellowship with God, then I will walk even as He walked. And how did He walk? That which characterized the life of Jesus as He walked a Man among men was His absolute submission to the will of His Father.

This submission to the Father's will was prophesied in the Psalms.

Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast not desired; My ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart (Psalm 40:6-8).

This is repeated in Hebrews 10:5-10 where twice we read, "Behold, I have come to do thy will, O God."

You cannot find a time in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ when He was not in absolute submission to His Father.

When our Lord became 12 years of age, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem into the temple before God so that He might take His place as a son under the law. This was their custom as the law demanded. After this, Jesus was personally responsible to God for His own life. As Joseph and Mary were returning to Nazareth, they missed Jesus and returned to Jerusalem to find Him. They found Him in the midst of the doctors, confounding those doctors in the temple. When they told Jesus they had been looking all over for Him, He answered, "How is it that ye sought me; did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). As a son under the law, He was responsible to be obedient and submissive to His Father's will.

Notice these words of our Lord:

- **My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work (John 4:34).**
- **For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me (John 6:38).**

- **And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone; for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him (John 8:29).**
- **Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt (Matthew 26:39).**
- **Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God . . . (John 13:3).**

The Father had utter confidence in the Son, trusting that He would go through and do the work that He was supposed to do.

- **I glorified Thee on the earth, I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do (John 17:4).**
- **It is finished (John 19:30).**

He had completed everything that was in the Father's will and purpose for Him to do. That which characterized the life of our Saviour was complete submission to the will of His Father.

When we walk in fellowship with God, there will be in us that same submission to the will of our Father. Again I ask, how can we know the will of our Father, how can we be obedient to His Word, unless we stay in the Word of God? How can we know the purpose of God for our lives unless we live in the Word of God where it is revealed to us?

We do not know the will of God by some experience. We find the will of God, we find the purpose of God for our lives, we find the desire of God for us in the Word of God. We must go to the Word of God!

The more we read it, the more we hide the Word in our minds and in our hearts, the greater will be our desire to be obedient to His Word and to be submissive to His will. When this is true, He will have more delight in us; and we will have more fulness of joy in Him.

Profession carries with it an obligation. Divine fellowship results in a corresponding action. We will walk as He walked. And when we walk as He

walked, we will love as He loved. Isn't that going too far? What did He say?

That you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34, 35).

We are to forgive as He has forgiven. But He forgave everything! That's right. And we are to forgive everything.

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).

Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Colossians 3:13).

We are to serve as He served.

As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth (John 17:18, 19).

Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you (John 20:21).

Here is a life to be lived. We are not under the law of the Ten Commandments nor are we under the Sermon on the Mount. We are on a higher plane. The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are law. The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the spirit of the law. Hating a brother without a cause is equal to murder. Lusting after a woman is adultery in the heart. This is the spirit of the law.

We have a higher walk. We are to walk as He walked, love as He loved, forgive as He has forgiven, serve as He served. This is a supernatural life. It can be lived only by Christ living in us. If we say that we are abiding in Him, that we are walk-

ing in fellowship with Him, then we will walk as He walked in obedience and in submission to the will of the Father.

After His resurrection, Jesus sent forth His disciples to bear testimony to the world, to reveal something of the character and heart and love and grace and tenderness and compassion of God. How else can the world know Him unless we walk as He walked, love as He loved, forgive as He has forgiven, and serve as He served?

If we desire to have Christ live this supernatural life through us, then there is one more wonderful thing which we must do. We are to pray as He prayed.

Will you please open your Bible to John 16 and read the entire passage from verse 23 to verse 28. We will note that Jesus said to His disciples,

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father (John 16:26,27).

He is saying, "I am giving you the same rights that I have. Just as I come into the presence of My Father and make My needs known, so can you because you love Me." What a blessed privilege!

To walk as He walked is something we cannot accomplish in our own strength. It is supernatural. It is impossible for a man to imitate Christ. This is the very reason He has given us the Word of God and He has given us the Spirit of God who indwells us. It is impossible for the man of the world to live the Christian life. And it is impossible for us, apart from Him.

The only way this life is possible is by yielding our lives to God so that He might live His life through us.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20).

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you (Romans 8:11).

So it is possible for us to live the life that He wants us to live. When we walk in fellowship with God, there will be that evidence.

Not by some crisis experience! Not by miracles!

Not by spiritual gifts!

Spiritual gifts are not a sign of spirituality. A person can have all the gifts of the Spirit and still be carnal. One needs only to read the Book of Corinthians to find this. In chapter 14 we read that they had all the gifts of the Spirit, yet in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 Paul says four times, "You are carnal." Just because one has had some great experience does not mean that person is spiritual. Spirituality is evident by obedience to the Word of God and submission to the will of God.

3. The third evidence of fellowship with God is love for the brethren.

2:9. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

2:10. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

2:11. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Walking in love for the brethren is an indication that we are walking in fellowship with the living God. In Colossians 1:13 we read that God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

If I am walking in that light, if I really know the Lord, then it will be manifested by love for the brethren. This love for God's people is not something that we can produce, but it is made possible

and made known by our union with Him “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”(Romans 5:5).

In other words, divine love is in the heart of every Christian. As we yield ourselves to Him, there will be evidence of that love one for another.

Allow me to show a contrast here. You will notice there are three things said about the believer. He walks in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). He is in the light (1 John 2:9) and he abides in the light (1 John 2:10). Love is the evidence of where he lives.

There are also three things stated about the unbeliever and darkness. The unbeliever is in darkness, he walks in darkness, and darkness has blinded his eyes (1 John 2:11).

Our love for our brother, in spite of his faults, manifests that we are in the light and not in the dark. It is easy to love those who love us. Unfortunately, when another Christian fails, our problem is that we sit as judges and critics, and then we are not very lovable. We ought to love the brother, in spite of his failure, and seek to help him because we love him.

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

A fellow Christian may be in trouble, in failure, out of fellowship with God. He may be bitter or just plain “ornery.” How are we going to bring him out of it if we do not love him? This does not mean that we condone sin. It does mean that we should manifest love. When we seek to restore such an one, it should not be with a censorious and critical spirit, but rather in love.

One of the tragedies of the present time is that so many churches (I say this very sadly) have been split and shattered because of lack of love one for another. One who boasts about being evangelical, about loving the Saviour, about loving truth and

sound doctrine, is very inconsistent if he hates his brother.

The inevitable mark of walking in fellowship with God who is light is love for the brethren.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).

Is it not wonderful that the Lord's love for us never changes? Our frailty and failure never affect His love for us. God grant that we shall manifest the same spirit to those who belong to the Saviour. May obedience to His Word, submission to His will, and love for the brethren characterize our lives.

THE PLACE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

2:12. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

We find that the place of the fellowship is in the family. In this verse, the Greek word for children is "teknia" which means the "born ones" and includes of the whole family of God.

The only way we can be in the family of God is by the new birth (John 1:12,13; 1 Peter 1:23). To those who are in the family, John says, "I write unto you, *teknia* (born ones), because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

Forgiveness is for the whole family! We are speaking here of something that is true for every believer. This complete, perfect, and permanent pardon for every believer is based on the grace of God.

- **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE (Ephesians 1:7).**
- **And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ (FOR CHRIST'S SAKE—KJV) also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).**

- **I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE (1 John 2:12).**

How wonderful it is to have this blessed assurance, to know that the moment we come to the Saviour we have forgiveness of sins and we receive a pardon that is eternal. We are accepted in the Beloved. We are members of the family of God.

John goes on to speak of three kinds of people in the family of God. There are the fathers, the young men, and the babies. They have all been born into the family, but they are not all at the same stage of maturity. They have not all attained the same spiritual growth. He has something to say to each of them. He speaks first to the fathers.

1. The declaration to the fathers.

2:13. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

And then John repeats it.

2:14. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

He is not talking here about a person who has led someone else to Christ. Paul did use the word "father" with that meaning when he wrote to the Corinthian church that they had many teachers but one father (1 Corinthians 4:15). In a sense, we become spiritual fathers to people when we lead them to the Saviour and build them up in Christ.

But that is not the meaning here. He is talking about spiritual growth. They are fathers in the faith and they are mature spiritually.

You will notice that there is no word of exhortation concerning walk or doctrine given to the fathers. He simply says, "I write unto you fathers, because you have known Him."

This is experiential knowledge. They are fathers because of their experience in Christ. These are the ones who know intimately the Incarnate Word of God. They have gone through the tests and trials and afflictions of life, and yet, in spite of it all, they are fully satisfied with Christ. The world has no more pull on them. The flesh is kept in subjection.

They know how to walk before God. If they fail, they know what to do. They confess their sin to God, are forgiven and cleansed, and go on in perfect fellowship with Him. This is the mature, the truly spiritual Christian.

If the apostle had no admonition to the fathers, neither do I. If you believe that you are a father, that you are mature in faith and in spiritual life, that you know sound doctrine, that you know where you stand, then you can say with Paul:

- **I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (2 Timothy 1:12).**
- **For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).**

The great yearning of the heart of God is that His people may be absolutely, perfectly satisfied with the Saviour. It is possible for a Christian to so walk with God, to be so in love with the Saviour, to so know the Word of God, that the one desire of his heart is to please Him.

The circumstances, trials, afflictions, troubles, disappointments, and sorrows of life do not disturb the deep-seated peace of the mature Christian because he knows the Lord is with him. He knows that the Lord will never leave him, that He knows all the circumstances, and that He is the God over all circumstances. He is perfectly satisfied to trust Him for every moment of every day, to know His way, and to walk in it.

His great joy is to live in fellowship with his Lord. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews teaches us

that God has given us faith, not to transform the world, but to walk with Him.

Are you a mature Christian? Do you know what it means to walk with God? This is our desire for each one of you.

2. The address to the young men.

2:13. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. . . .

2:14. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

2:15. Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

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

2:17. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

The young men are the believers in conflict.

Three things are said about them. They are strong. That is, they have spiritual power and courage of faith and purpose. They have conviction and are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. They have a real purpose in life.

The reason they are strong is because the Word of God is abiding in them. It is their daily food.

The third statement John makes concerning them is that they have overcome the wicked one.

There is no possibility of victory over the enemy apart from the Word of God. We, too, can be strong when we use the only aggressive weapon that God has given us—the Word of God abiding in us.

In Matthew 4 and Luke 4 we find the story of our Saviour in the wilderness, being led there of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil. Satan approached Him with testing concerning the grace of God, the Word of God, and the Person of God.

You will remember that the Lord answered, "It is written!" "It is written!" "It is written!" If we are to have victory over the enemy, we must be able to say, "It is written!"

My Christian friend, may I say very solemnly that it is not possible to live the Christian life without a knowledge of the Word of God. We must spend time in His Word to know the Saviour whom we trust, the One who is our Lord and who gives us the victory.

In verses 15-17, we find that the young men have another enemy—the world! John gives a strong exhortation concerning this. Let us read those verses again:

2:15. Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

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

2:17. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

What is meant here by the world? It is a system, an economic, social, political, religious system. It started with Cain who went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city (Genesis 4). His purpose was to make the earth a beautiful place to live in—without God. This is still true today. Let us always remember that the world is our enemy. There is a tremendous barrier between God the Father and the world.

The world appeals to us through three avenues: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is always true.

In Genesis, chapter three, we find that Satan tempted Adam and Eve these three ways. He questioned the love of God by implying that God was withholding something good from them in forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He caused them to doubt the Word of God when he told them they would not die. Then he attacked the Person of God by saying they would be like gods, knowing good and evil.

He tempted them in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:6).

Her pride was manifest because she desired to be as God. She rebelled against the law and character of God. She was disobedient to the word of God. In deliberately disobeying, she sinned and became alienated from God.

Satan used the same approaches when he tempted our Lord in the wilderness.

He will approach you in the same way. He has not changed his methods of seeking to win men away from devotion to the Saviour and from a walk in the purpose and will of Christ. He wants to defeat the purpose of God in your life. He comes in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The worst of the three is pride. Pride was the cause of Satan's downfall. Pride is the root sin. The thing that oftentimes keeps us from doing that which God wants us to do is pride. But let us remember that, apart from what we have in Christ, we having nothing of which we can be proud.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh (Romans 7:18).

If we have any gifts or talents, let us thank God for them. He is the Giver. We are the recipients.

So we see that we have three implacable enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Sometimes we think that our lives should be easy after we have committed ourselves to the Lord. Then we find that we have more tests and trials than before we became Christians. That is to be expected!

Before we became Christians, we did not have any opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil because we lived without any responsibility to God.

Now that we are Christians, our lives have been changed. We are in His family. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We want to do His will. Our citizenship is in heaven from whence we look for our Saviour. We are occupied with Him. Our responsibility is to love Him and serve Him and tell others about Him. We can expect to be attacked by the enemy who is always in opposition to God and to those who desire to live for Him.

Every believer is engaged in a warfare. Paul writes of this in Ephesians 6:10-18. Our fight is against Satan and all his cohorts, all the rulers of the darkness of this world. He speaks not only of our enemy, but also of the provision we have against him. He exhorts us to put on the whole armour of God.

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert . . . (Ephesians 6:14-18).

May I suggest a study that reveals the exactness and perfection of Scripture concerning our enemies and the provision made for us.

It is the Father who is in opposition to the world (1 John 2:15). In the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, our Saviour is talking to the Father concerning His own and He mentions the "world" 19 times. Then He prays,

I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:15,16).

It is the Spirit who is in opposition to the flesh (Galatians 5:16, 25; Romans 8:12,13).

It is Christ who is in opposition to Satan or anti-christ (1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14,15; 1 John 4:2,3).

Every provision has been made for us. We know that the whole world system of which we have been speaking is under the judgment of God. We who are in the family of God have been delivered, not only from judgment, but also from the power of Satan and from the present evil world (Galatians 1:3,4; 6:14).

It is wonderful to know that between the believer and the world stands the cross of Christ. Because this is true, we have a special responsibility:

2:15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. . . .

2:17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

The world and its lust I do not endure. Let me emphasize again that the world is under the judgment of God, and Christians have been delivered from the world.

Why should we waste our time on passing, transient things when we can know the joys and blessings of fellowship with the One who is eternal? How many Christians are frittering away their time with things that perish with the using, when they could be occupied with eternal glories!

My friend, when our hearts are occupied with Him, we can know the peace of God, the rest of heart that is found only in Him. We can experience His joy in the midst of suffering, His comfort in sorrow.

It is an amazing thing that the eternal, omnipotent God has made provision for us to walk with Him. Let us not let anything rob us of this intimacy and fellowship.

There can be only one supreme object of moral devotion. It will be either the world or the Father.

Where is the devotion of your heart? He loves you and has a special plan and purpose for you.

May your heart be set upon Him so that He can lead you and bless you and use you.

3. The instruction to the little children.

The apostle now writes to the last group in the family of God, the little children. The Greek word here is "*paidia*" which means "the inexperienced ones" or, let me use the term, the little babes.

2:13. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

2:18. Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.

2:19. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

While the enemy of the young men is the world, the enemy of the babes in Christ is the false teacher. In the early church the false teachers manifested themselves by denying the incarnate Word of God. In chapter 4, verses 2 and 3, we read that the spirit of antichrist is the denial of the person of our Saviour. This is stated here in chapter 2, verses 21-26, in more detail. These seducers do not teach that Jesus is the Christ nor that this Jesus of Nazareth is God manifest in the flesh.

The deity of Jesus was the issue when our Lord stood before the high priest in Matthew 26.

The high priest said to our Lord,

I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself, nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:63,64).

The high priest had put our Lord under oath and when he did that, our Lord said in effect, "That is true. I am the Christ, the Son of God. Not only that, but I am the One who is going to fulfill

Daniel chapter seven, for the Messiah is going to come in the clouds of heaven.”

You will remember that our Lord spoke of this to his disciples in Matthew 16:27,28; 24:30 and 25:31-46.

The spirit of antichrist denies all that Jesus Christ claimed to be and to do. This is the issue brought to us in the second and third Epistles of John. The ones they were to exclude from the fellowship were those who denied the Incarnate Word of God. It was evident who they were, and it was manifest that they did not belong in the church of Jesus Christ.

In the twentieth century church, those who believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God are sometimes asked to leave. My, what a contrast to the first century church! We see it clearly set before us here.

When a person or a church denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, that person or church has the spirit of antichrist, and we are told to have nothing to do with them. I am not trying to be hard or severe. I am telling you what the Word of God has to say.

The babes in Christ are warned to beware of these false teachers. We know that the various cults today, with their false doctrines, seek out inexperienced Christians. They work on those who are untaught and who know little of the Word of God. They may come to your door with a Bible under their arm, but the purpose is to detract from the glorious person of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. They deny the physical resurrection of Christ, who died to put away our sin and was raised again from the dead by the glory of the Father.

We find the same thing on the mission field. The cults do not go to the unsaved, the pagans, and idolaters. They go to those who are babes in Christ, who know the Saviour but are untaught, and try to lead them astray.

The important advice to the babes in Christ is to feed on the Word of God. One does not feed a baby T-bone steak, but milk. This is stated in Hebrews 5:12-14. Babies need milk to grow.

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

Babes in Christ, you cannot stand for God in this world unless you are nourished by the Word of God.

You may say, “Mr. Mitchell, you always come back to that.”

That's right! I do, because you cannot grow apart from the Word of God. You cannot overcome the enemy apart from the Word of God. You cannot walk before God in fellowship with Him apart from His Word.

Let us be like the psalmist. “His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

Let us heed the exhortation of the apostle, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).

Remember that God is the faithful One. Jesus assures us that the Spirit of God will use His Word in our lives.

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).

So you see that the babes in Christ do not need admonition on how to walk as much as warning concerning false teachers.

They are in the family.

They have forgiveness.

They know the Father.

The exhortation to them is to be occupied with the Incarnate Word of God. The reason is that we are in the last times and there are many antichristian forces in the world.

In verses 22 and 23, John tells us that the one who loves the Saviour will acknowledge both the father and the Son.

Be careful about someone who comes to you with new truth. The Word of God was given to us

and completed in the first century. The Son of God has been revealed. The revelation of God in His purposes and plans has been fully given.

If you are a babe in Christ, seek daily to know what God has revealed in His Word. May I encourage you to read it even though there is much you may not understand. Read it and read it and re-read it, and the Lord will reveal Himself to you.

The apostle continues by giving encouragement to these babes in Christ, the little children of the family of God. The first of these encouragements is the Holy Spirit who is indwelling them.

2:20. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

2:27. And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

John does not mean here that we are not to have teachers, for God has given gifted men to teach the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11-13). We can know these men from the false teachers because they make Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, the center of attraction. He does mean that because the Spirit of God, who is the author of Scripture, indwells every believer, He will lead and guide into all truth and keep us from that which is false (John 16:13).

He also enables us to compare spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13). We are not to believe everything we hear, but we are to prove all things, and we must prove them by the Word of God.

The second encouragement is that we have the Word of God by which to prove all things.

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

2:22. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

2:23. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

2:24. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father

2:25. And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

2:26. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

One is ever amazed at how little God's people know of the Word of God, of the purpose of God for their lives and for the church. There are comparatively few who lovingly and diligently study the Scriptures. The result is that many, although they have been saved for 30 or 40 or 50 years, are still babes in Christ.

Babyhood is wonderful in only one place and that is in babies. Everyone of us who belongs to the family of God has the indwelling Spirit to teach us how to know the Word of God and how to walk before Him in the path that He has for us.

You will remember Paul's admonition to Timothy: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14,15).

This is God's weapon for us. The Word of God is unchanging. It is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). It will keep us steady in times of trial and testing as we contend with opposition, false doctrine, and the pull of the world. Stay in the Word. Meditate upon these things. Give yourself wholly to them.

The third encouragement is the promise of His coming. Actually, this encouragement is not for the babes only but for the whole family of God, because the Greek word used here is the same one which was in verse 12, "*teknia*," which means the "born ones."

2:28. And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at his coming.

Abiding in Him should be the normal Christian experience. In 1 John 3:24, we find that to abide in Him is to obey Him. Perhaps you thought that abiding in Christ means having fellowship with God. That is true. But it is when we obey the Word of God that we are in fellowship with Him. Our sins have been forgiven, the Spirit of God indwells us, we have His Word, we are partners with Him, we are one with Him.

Then let us obey His Word and fully enjoy fellowship with Him. John tells us here that we should stay in fellowship with Him, so that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

We could look at this verse in several ways.

Was John, as an apostle of Christ, going to be ashamed of his children who were not walking with God? This could be the meaning, and I could appreciate that point of view.

A pastor comes before God in behalf of some of those whom he has led to the Saviour and then finds that they are not walking orderly and are not bringing honor to the Lord. The world has come into their lives; the flesh with its weakness has taken over.

If the Lord should come, the pastor would wonder, "Where have I failed these dear people? In instruction? In encouragement?"

So it could be that John is saying that if the Lord should come and you are not walking in fellowship with Him, then we Apostles, we who have given you the revelation of our wonderful Saviour, would be ashamed.

However, I am inclined to believe it is a personal matter. The whole family of God, individually and collectively, will have confidence and will come into His presence with a boldness of speech and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. I have thought a good deal about this. Is it possible that there are going to be some who are going to be taken up to be with the Lord who are going to be ashamed when they stand in His presence?

My friend, if the Lord Jesus should come for His own today, and He may, would you be ashamed of what you are doing?

Would you be ashamed of some of the things you have said?

Would you be ashamed of some of the plans you are making? This verse is very practical and heart searching. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 21:4).

I wonder if this will be because some Christians will be ashamed before Him at His coming. The translation of the church is on the ground of grace. But the question here is:

Will we be found abiding in fellowship with Him?

God is faithful to everyone who has put his trust in Him. He is faithful to the strong and the weak ones, to the mature in Christ and the babes in Christ. He gives us divine life when we accept Him. Then He makes provision for us to experience and enjoy that divine life and to live in continual fellowship with Him.

The Spirit of God comes to indwell us and to plead our cause before Christ. He has given us the Word of God in our hands to read so that we might be cleansed through the Word and receive light from it. Christ, the Lord of Glory, pleads our cause before the Father. What a provision God has made for us!

This 28th verse is a great encouragement to all of us. The same thought is in Hebrews 10:37: "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." It is an amazing thing that when we stand before God, we will stand before Him in all the beauty and righteousness of Christ. In view of this, we are encouraged to abide in Him, to walk in fellowship with Him, to obey Him, so that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

Yesterday, you may have had a wonderful experience with the Lord. That is marvelous. But that is past, my friend. What about today?

The great yearning of the heart of God is for your fellowship today, wherever you are.

And now, little children, abide in Him!

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHO IS RIGHTEOUS

2:29. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

We have come to the second great division of the Epistle and we learn that God is righteous. He is righteous in every thing He does, which means that He *always* does the right thing.

We find some people sitting in judgment on God, asking why He permits certain things to happen in the earth. They mention war, bloodshed, and sorrow and ask why God does not step into the scene.

My friend, may I say to you, do not sit in judgment on God! Dare we infer that we are more righteous than God? Dare we infer that we are more loving or more merciful than God?

God is not dealing with nations today. God is dealing with men and women everywhere, wherever He finds them. If God were dealing with nations today, the wrath of God would be upon them for their sins, their corruption, and their opposition to Him. God is righteous, and everything He does is right.

I may not understand all that He does. That does not alter the fact. Abraham, as he pleaded for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, could say, **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).**

Here, then, is the revelation that God is righteous. The requirement for fellowship with a righteous God, of course, is righteousness.

A believer may be discouraged to find that after a profession of faith he still sins. We discussed this at the end of the first chapter and the begin-

ning of the second chapter. God has made provision for cleansing and forgiving the sins of His people.

Yet it is true that **a practical righteousness** certainly must be consistent in one who is in fellowship with a righteous God. If we claim to be in fellowship with a God who is righteous, then our lives will be righteous. At least there will be evidence of practical righteousness which will be consistent with the God whom we love and serve and with whom we walk.

This is not to be confused with **imputed righteousness**, which means to

“be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

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

Romans 1:16,17 states that the gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God. Romans 3:21-31, that basic passage on justification by faith, declares that God may be just (righteous) and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made it possible for God to seek unrighteous, sinful people and pronounce them righteous.

Remember that sin pays wages, and God executes the penalty. How can we be freed?

How can *God be freed* so that He can pronounce proven sinners to be righteous?

When Christ died on the cross, He *satisfied the righteous character of God* and freed God to be able to pronounce righteous those sinners who believe on His Son. This is an imputed righteousness.

Since we are in Christ Jesus, we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Such a position in

Christ will also be evident in our walk. If we claim to be the children of a righteous God, then our lives ought to manifest something of that righteousness. The righteousness which we have in Christ is a divine righteousness and is able to stand the test of the holy, righteous character of God.

An unsaved person, one who is born and shapen in iniquity, cannot manifest righteousness. But the person who accepts the Saviour becomes a new man or a new woman in Christ and stands before God in all the righteousness of Christ, being accepted in the beloved (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Eph. 1:6).

This is what will be manifested as we walk in fellowship with God. Our lives will be changed. It is true that while we are still in our bodies we will have frailty and weakness and failure at times. This does not alter the fact that we stand before God in all the righteousness of Christ and that practical righteousness is the norm for one who is in fellowship with a righteous God.

Let us be very clear about this. **Imputed righteousness**, that is, our standing before God, is based on our relationship with God.

When we manifest **practical righteousness**, we are proving the source of a new life. We are then revealing the fact that we belong to God. People may notice and say that we are different. Of course, we *are* different! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have the opportunity to be a channel for God to display His righteousness before men. The danger is that we throw up our hands and say, "Well, I guess this is not for me. I fail so often." So the Apostle goes on with:

THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FELLOWSHIP

3:1. See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

3:2. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

3:3. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The first thing to mark is that all Christians, the weak as well as the strong ones, are the objects of His love. Behold! Who ever heard of such a thing that sinners redeemed by the blood of Christ can become the objects of the love of God! In John 3:16 we are told **the measure of His love**. The same is true in Romans 5:8 where we read,

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, Christ died for us.”

In the verse we are considering here, we are dealing with **the manner of His love**. Here is an imparted, a bestowed love so great and wonderful that we are brought into relationship with Him as His children. **We receive not only an imparted life, but also an imparted love.**

One translation of this first verse says “that we should be called the sons of God”—and we are!

In the Gospel according to John, we find this same wonderful truth of an imparted life. When a sinner accepts the Saviour, he receives a new life from God.

“In Him was life” (John 1:4).

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12).

In this new relationship we are partakers of the divine nature, and the imparted life which we receive is divine life.

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these YE MIGHT BE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

This is not stated to angels, nor to principalities and powers, but to redeemed sinners.

What a wonderful place His love has given us! What a nobility of position! What a place of honor, of perfect assurance, of divine relationship! We find our hearts quieted in wonder. We are the children of One who is God.

The righteous God loves us!!

In John 13:1, the night when Jesus was betrayed, the night that Peter denied Him, the night that all His disciples ran away and left Him, it still could be said of Jesus that "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." It is because of this divine love for us as His children that we can come with confidence into the presence of God and have blessed, intimate fellowship with Him.

Who would not love such a Saviour?

Who would not want a life of obedience and submission in fellowship with such a God?

The result of this relationship is stated in the last half of the first verse,

3:1b. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Did you ever stop to think that the world never understood Jesus?

The Lord Jesus took His place among men and lived in the human family, but they never knew Him. He never sought wealth or fame or power. All He wanted was His Father's will. Hence the world disowned Him, cast Him out, and crucified Him.

The world still wants to carry on its program without God and without God's people. In many ways Christians are a thorn in the flesh to those leaders who wish to bring in a world dominion without God. The world is turning more and more away from God. It does not want God nor His interference with its plans and its program. When we declare that we are the children of One who is God, this world, which never knew the Saviour, will not know us either.

The world had no place for Christ. The world will have no place for us.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18-20).

When we come to know the Lord, we are willing to give up even our friends for His sake. But believe me, when our friends give us up—that's different! Then we find how much pride we have. Jesus said that if a man would come after Him, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23). If we follow the Lord, then we should not be surprised if the world misunderstands us and has no place for us.

Our *present relationship* to God is restated in the second verse:

3:2. Beloved, now are we children of God.

We are not waiting to become children of God. We are the children of God now. We will never be any closer in relationship with God, even after we have been in the glory for a thousand years. Relationship does not change. Fellowship does.

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

“God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4,5).

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph. 1:5).

God has determined that everyone who will put his trust in His Son should be adopted into His family as sons. It is an amazing thing. We are the sons of One who is God, and we are and ever will be the objects of His love and His devotion.

The verse goes on to state our future relationship.

3:2. And it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

God our Father is righteous. Our future experience will be that we will stand in His presence looking just like His precious Son, who is made unto us righteousness. I love the confidence of John. *We know.*

How much do we know?

I KNOW whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

BEING CONFIDENT of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).

The American Standard Version translates the last phrase, "even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God."

Did you ever stop to think of it? When God gets through with you and me, we are going to be just like His Son. What will we look like when we get to heaven? Just like Jesus. My, what a transformation! Only God could do this.

We tend to look at the other fellow and say, "I am so glad he is going to be changed."

Yes, but we are going to be changed, too. We can look at other Christians today and find plenty of ground to criticize. But let us not do that. Wait

until God is through with all of us. God is not going to be satisfied with any of us until we stand in his presence like His Son.

You will never be satisfied with me, and I will never be satisfied with you until we look just like Jesus. I say again, only God can do that. Isn't it wonderful that we have this joyful anticipation of the coming of our Saviour, whom having not seen we love?

▪ **"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I KNOW in part; but then shall I KNOW even as also I am known"** (1 Corinthians 13:12).

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

- **"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3;20, 21).**

▪

What a blessed hope! Today we can live in the anticipation of His coming.

We have noted that we are encouraged in our fellowship because of our present relationship as the sons of God. It is this relationship which causes the world not to know us, because it did not know Him. We are also encouraged by the future prospect that when the Lord Jesus comes, the dead in Christ will be raised, and we believers will be caught up together with them and will be transformed and glorified (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:10,11).

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14;3).

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15).

Read also the passages in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24.

We also read,

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If contemplation and occupation with Christ affects our lives and changes our lives now, what will it be when we see Him face to face? We shall be just like Him.

May I add a solemn note here? When the world sees Him, it will be a time of judgment for them:

“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1:7).

The Christian looks forward with joyful anticipation, but the world shall wail.

You see, the first time He came to the world as a Saviour, but the next time He will return to the world as the Judge.

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:15,16).

Twenty-seven times in the Book of Revelation He is called the Lamb of God. Men are going to be judged in the presence of the Lamb.

If you are unsaved, what is your hope?

What is your prospect?

When you leave this world, then what?

It is an amazing thing that when we read the New Testament, we find that God has hope for the earth upon which we walk. It has the hope of being delivered from the curse of sin. The animal creation has hope (Rom. 8:18-25). The believer in Christ has hope.

Did you ever stop to think of the one group which has no hope? There are no prospects ahead for those who are out of Christ, who have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Life is only a fleeting shadow. We are here today and gone tomorrow. But you can have hope and you can have life. Take the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for you and rose again, as your own personal Saviour, and then you, too, will have hope. *In Him is Life.*

I do not remember where I read this, but it is worth repeating:

Sonship starts with life,
It is expressed in love,
It is marked by loyalty,
It culminates in likeness.
When we see Him,
We shall be like Him!

The following outline is by Dr. Griffith Thomas taken from his *The Apostle John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 279-283)

"WE ARE NOW HIS CHILDREN"

The Fact of Sonship (1 John 2:29 and 3:1)

The Mark of Sonship—practical righteousness (1 John 2:29)

The Privilege of Sonship—objects of His love (1 John 3:1)

The Consciousness of Sonship—we are His sons (1 John 3:1)

The Mystery of Sonship—the world doesn't even know us (1 John 3:1)

The Crown of Sonship—we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2)

The Demands of Sonship—to purify ourselves as He is pure (1 John 3:3)

Our present relationship and our hope for the future have a practical application in our *present experience*.

3:3. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Every man that hath this hope in him has the incentive for holy living. The blessed hope and prospect of seeing Him face to face is a purifying hope. Notice that Christ Himself is the standard of Christian living. We are to purify ourselves even as He is pure. May I say that setting our hearts on Him always brings purification from defilement. When we shall see Him, we shall be like Him.

What an incentive to live for God!

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Do you love His appearing? If you do, you will purify yourself even as He is pure. This is a sanctifying, a purifying hope.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 4:15,16).

THE OPPOSITION TO THE FELLOWSHIP

3:4. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness.

3:5. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

3:6. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

3:7. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

3:8. the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

3:9. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

3:10. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

3:11. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

3:12. not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous.

3:13. Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.

It may come as a surprise to some to learn that there is opposition to fellowship with God who is righteous. Before we became Christians, we didn't have any opposition. The devil was not opposed to us, the world was not opposed to us, and the flesh was enjoying sin too much.

When we accepted the Saviour, we were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. We received the gift of eternal life and the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Immediately we had three enemies:

- 1) the world,
- 2) the flesh,
- 3) and the devil.

As we study the opposition to the fellowship with God who is righteous, we must first of all see what sin is. The very first verse of this section defines it for us.

3:4. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Sin is lawlessness. Sin is self-will and rebellion against the person and law of God. It is not merely the transgression of the law of the Ten Commandments or the law of the Sermon on the Mount, but rather it is the spirit of lawlessness. It is a life which is lived without respect or consideration for the will and purpose of God.

I would like to say here that the law of Moses was not given as a means of salvation, but it was given to reveal what sin is. I would like to list here eleven things which the law does or does not do.

WHAT THE LAW CAN DO AND CANNOT DO

1. It makes sin exceeding sinful (Romans 7:7,13; 5:20).
2. It works wrath (Romans 4:15).
3. It is a ministration of death (2 Corinthians 3:7-9).
4. It is the strength of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56).
5. It brings a curse (Galatians 3:10).
6. It was added because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19).
7. By the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).
8. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).
9. The law is not of faith (Galatians 3:12)
10. The law cannot justify (Romans 3:20).
11. The law cannot give life (Galatians 3:21).

We see that the law is not of faith. It cannot give life. It cannot forgive or cleanse. It cannot make us strong. It demands, but gives no power to perform. The law makes sin exceeding sinful and gives a distinctive character to sin.

It acts like a mirror to show us just how unclean we are (James 1:22-24). Mr. Moody used to

say that we certainly do not wash our face with the mirror. The law shows us that we are transgressors, but it does not make us good. It cannot make us righteous; instead, it works wrath.

The law served as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4).

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

John has explained in this chapter that sin is the transgression of the law. It is lawlessness. Sin is contrary to the very character of a righteous God, and so sin breaks fellowship with God. Sin is an enemy and should have no place in the life of one who is a child of God.

The Apostle goes on to tell us that we have deliverance in our Lord Jesus Christ. The law is on one side of the cross, and the Christian is on the other side of the cross. This does not mean that Christians never sin. It does mean that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, and that *He is our righteousness*.

3:5. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

Two things are mentioned about our Lord in this verse. The one has to do with *His work*, and the other concerns *His Person*. We will consider the statement concerning his Person first.

3:5. In Him there is no sin.

He is the absolutely sinless One with no trace of rebellion in Him. He is the exact opposite of what we are. In order to get a realistic look at ourselves, we must look at the Saviour.

Jesus is God's perfect Man. Jesus, as He walked among men, lived the life that God wants men to live. Jesus could say to the religious leaders of His day,

“Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John 8:46).

His life was an open book. He could tell the high priest that He had done nothing in secret. I wonder, my friend, whether we would like others to see the secrets of our lives. Remember that Pilate had to acknowledge that he could find no fault in him at all (John 18:38).

There are other Scriptures which refer to the truth that Jesus Christ is the sinless One.

- **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, WHO KNEW NO SIN; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).**
- **“WHO DID NO SIN, neither was guile found in his mouth” (I Peter 2:22).**
- **“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, YET WITHOUT SIN” (Heb. 4:15).**
- **“WHICH OF YOU CONVINCETH ME OF SIN?” (John 8:46)**
- **“IN HIM IS NO SIN” (1 John 3:5).**
-

His work, that which He has accomplished for us, is the basic, essential, blessed truth of the Gospel. He had no sin in Himself, but He was manifested to take away our sins. The sinless One became sin. He was a fit sacrifice, and He put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself. We should make no apology or allowance for sin when we realize that our Lord was manifested to take away our sins.

- **“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21)**
- **“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).**
- **“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world” (Gal. 1:4).**

- “But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26).
- “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12).
- “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

In the eighth verse, the Apostle goes on to tell us that He was manifested so that He might destroy the works of the devil.

3:8b. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

I personally believe that the Lord Jesus Christ and the devil had a personal conflict. As a man, Christ faced the devil in person and defeated him. In His death, Christ triumphed over the devil. It is a wonderful truth that He guarantees to us deliverance from the power of the devil.

There is one thing that is absolutely sure: The devil has no authority over those who are in Christ Jesus. Our Lord was manifested to take away our sins and to destroy the works of the devil.

Proof Texts

- Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14,15).
- Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:14,15).(*“In it” means in the cross.*)

- **Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out (John 12:31).**

What a wonderful deliverance He has made for us! Not only has He delivered us from the power of sin and Satan, but He has made us His children. We cannot repeat too often what John is showing us in this Epistle. The great yearning of the heart of God is that His children will walk in fellowship with Him.

The requirement for walking with God is that we must be righteous. He has made provision for this in Christ Jesus. So then, if I am a child of One who is righteous, righteousness should characterize my life.

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

Now let us review the thrust of this third chapter. In the first three verses, the Apostle encourages us because we are in Christ and we are His children; and it is because of this that we can have fellowship with Him.

In the section from verse four to verse thirteen, he shows us the opposition to fellowship with God. That opposition is because of sin and so, in verse four, he shows us what sin is. It is lawlessness.

However, there is a solution to the problem of sin, and this is stated in verses five and eight.

The answer to our problem is that Christ was manifested to put away sin, and He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

Now, as a demonstration of what he is teaching us, he gives to us the contract between two families in the section from verses six to thirteen. Those two families are the children of God and the children of the devil. It is a contrast between righteousness and sin.

The man in Christ Jesus is declared righteous by God. The believer in Christ is looked upon by God

as being righteous with that righteousness which is the mark of divine Sonship. Therefore, righteousness will manifest this relationship to God and be the evidence of it. *Practical righteousness is a mark of divine Sonship.*

This does not mean that a Christian will never sin. It does mean that the child of God does not *want* to sin. The believer in Christ does not habitually sin, so sinning is not the rule of his life. He is not dominated by sin. It is true that the Christian may fail God, but the pattern of his life is not one of rebellion and sinfulness against God. Rather, his desire is to please God.

Because this is true, the Christian may get disheartened when he does sin. Let me encourage you, my Christian friend, when you get disheartened about this.

Have you stopped to think that the man of the world does not get disheartened over sin? The unsaved man lives in sin. He is full of sin, full of self-will, full of unrighteousness. His relationship is not to God but is to the enemy, the devil; and therefore sin characterizes and dominates his life.

The devil was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and so those who reject the Saviour and follow the devil will manifest this by lives of sin.

The believer who is born of God is a new creation. This is stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The manner of this new birth is explained in John 1:12, 13. This new creation is created in righteousness and true holiness according to Ephesians 4:24. This new creation which is born of God does not commit sin. It is born of God and God is righteous.

3:9. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

This is restated later in this same Epistle.

“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” (1 John 5:18).

This new creation dwells in mortal, fleshly bodies, and so it is true that there are Christians who have been living somewhat in rebellion against God. This is a passing thing. If a person is really a child of God and is living in rebellion against God, then God will deal with him as with a son.

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6).

Chastening is not a pleasant thing to experience (Hebrews 12:11), but God uses it to keep His children from disobedience and to produce righteousness in character and in life.

God does not chasten those who are not His children. In fact, Hebrews 12:8 informs us that if we do not receive chastisement, the possibility is that we are not the children of God. I can remember that my mother did not chasten the neighbor's children, but she surely chastened us. So, whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.

If you really love the Lord, sin will not characterize your life. If you love to sin and love to rebel against the things of God, then you should examine your heart to find out if you are truly trusting the Saviour. A new creation, born of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Now the Apostle John goes on to give us an illustration of these two families and the characteristics of the families.

3:11. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

3:12. not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous.

3:13. Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.

Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. Their story is told in Genesis 4. Both boys had been taught by their parents. They understood the fact of sin. They knew that One would come, the Seed of the woman, who would provide redemption. They knew that they must bring an offering as they came to worship God, and they knew the kind of offering they should bring and its significance.

Abel took firstling of his flock, a lamb without blemish, to offer as a sacrifice. We read in Hebrews 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

In the bringing of his sacrifice he acknowledged that he was a sinner and that he believed in the promise of a coming Redeemer.

Cain, on the other hand, brought the fruit of a cursed ground as his sacrifice. He ignored the fact of sin and also the promise of God concerning a Saviour. He was an unbeliever. The great difference was that Abel responded to God's revelation and submitted to His will. He brought his offering in faith and obedience. Cain was disobedient and willful, coming to God with that which God could not receive.

Men today still seek to bring to God the fruit of a sinful, fallen nature; but a holy, righteous God cannot accept that which is sinful. Yet God was longsuffering with Cain, pleading with him to bring a sin offering. He rebelled against God, then rose up against his brother and slew him. He was not angry at Abel. He was angry at God. He demonstrated that anger by slaying God's man.

John tells us in our text that Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother. Why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's works were righteous. In other words, the heart of Cain in his attitude toward God manifested itself in his disobedience to the Word of God. The heart of Abel in his attitude toward God manifested itself in his obedience to the Word of God.

Let us make this very, very clear. One is not a child of the devil because he is bad nor is one a

child of God because he is good. A child of God is a person who has accepted God's way of salvation in Christ Jesus.

“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

God has declared that He will save. He will forgive. He will give eternal life to those people who accept His salvation in Christ Jesus.

Cain knew how he should come and knew what he should bring. He rebelled against God because his heart was evil. It was because of this evil heart that his works were bad. On the other hand, Abel had accepted God's way of salvation, and his heart was right toward God. Therefore, he responded in simple obedience; and in his sacrifice he manifested his faith and his obedience. This is the reason he was accepted of God.

May I give a word of caution. All people on earth are divided into two families. One is either a child of God or a child of the devil. Christians, please be very slow ever to call anyone a child of the devil! It does say in Ephesians 2:3 that we were all by nature the children of wrath. However, when Scripture uses the term “children of the devil” as in John 8 and here in this Epistle, it refers to people who hate the Lord Jesus. In our Lord's day, He referred to the religious leaders who were spurning and rebelling against Him, the Son of God. Here in this Epistle, a child of the devil is illustrated by Cain, who had an evil heart and manifested it in his refusal to obey God or to accept God's way of sacrifice.

May I also give a word of encouragement. God desires an intimacy with us. God makes known His ways only to those who walk with Him.

“He made known his ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel” (Psa. 103:7).

Israel saw only His acts, His power. Moses was given to know God's ways. How wonderful it is to

know that God wants to sit down with us, through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, and teach us the things pertaining to Himself. He yearns to open His heart to us and show us the purposes that He has for the world. So let us be warm-hearted, in love with the Saviour. When we read the Word of God, let us let *Him* come into our lives.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

It is interesting that in chapter two we learned that love for the brethren is the evidence of fellowship with God who is light. Here we learn that love for the brethren is also the evidence of fellowship with God who is righteous.

3:14. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

3:15. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

3:16. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

3:17. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

3:18. Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

We know. This is experiential knowledge. How do I know when I am in fellowship with God who is righteous? How do I know that I am a child of God?

We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. If I say that I am the child of God who is righteous, then I am going to manifest that by a righteous life, displayed in love for the brethren.

Remember, we do not receive eternal life by loving the brethren! Eternal life is a free gift from God received by faith (John 5:24; John 3:16; Rom.

6:23). Our faith has the risen Christ as its object. We have dared to believe that what God says is true. We have put our trust in the Saviour who died to put away our sins, and so we have received eternal life. This is what His Word declares.

God sees our faith and counts it to us for righteousness. Men cannot see our faith, but men can experience our love!

Then how can we know in our experience that we have eternal life? It will be manifested in our love for the brethren.

Life is not received by love. Life is received by relationship through faith. Love is the action of that life!

The passage from verses 5-13 shows us that eternal life will be manifested in us by righteousness. If a believer is in fellowship with a God who is righteous, then his acts will be righteous.

3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

Now John is getting right down into our hearts and telling us that if we claim to be joined to God who is righteous, it will be evident by our love for the brethren. Loving the unsaved is not mentioned here; the evidence is loving the brethren. So the manifestation of our fellowship with God is a life of practical righteousness and a love for the brethren.

The next logical question would be: how are we to manifest our love for the brethren? John answers this by an illustration.

3:16. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

He expresses the same thought in the fourth chapter.

4:9. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

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

God manifested His love to us by sacrifice. *We manifest our love for the brethren by sacrifice.* We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He is not talking about martyrdom here. He is talking about loving our brother with the kind of love He manifested. This is one of the greatest needs among God's people today.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34,35).

How shall we love each other? Even as He has loved us! This is a love that must come from God.

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Romans 5:5).

It is not our doctrine, nor our ability, nor some special gift of the Spirit, but it is love of the brethren that is the evidence of fellowship with God who is righteous. The Lord wants this love of the brethren to be a reality, not just empty profession. He wants deeds, not just talk. *God sees my faith but men should experience my love. Christianity is love in action.*

Let us not judge other Christians in the light of our own conscience or in the light of our experience. It is so easy to judge the falling brother and to criticize those who do not walk the way we think they should walk.

Remember, there are those in the family of God who are mature Christians, and there are those who are not mature. We do not expect a baby to live and act like a grown man or woman. Likewise, there must be time for growth in the things of God.

Immature Christians, new Christians, babes in Christ may say things and do things that are not right, yet they belong to the Saviour. We are to love them. If God loves them, we ought to, too.

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

Satan has knitted together all the antichristian forces, and he also succeeds in separating the believers from within. Love is the need among professing Christians today. We who love the Saviour and who love the Word of God should be genuine in our love one for the other. We are to love those who love the Saviour.

This does not mean that we are to compromise our own faith in the Saviour or our conviction of truth. It does mean we are to love anyone who belongs to the Saviour. How are we ever going to come together in a oneness of doctrine and of life unless we first love one another in Christ?

What a testimony it would be before the world if we loved even those who don't agree with us on every point!

Personally, I will go a long way with a person who really is genuine in his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. We must keep in mind that all Christians do not have the same opportunities, they are not equally taught, they do not equally love the Word of God.

Yet the command is that all Christians should love one another. The tragedy is that some Christians will even go to the world to criticize another Christian. This is what the world loves. It is like a sweet morsel under their tongue. It gives them ammunition against the gospel.

My brother, if we must criticize another Christian, let us do it in love and to his face, or, if necessary, before the people of God. Let us never go to the world and there run down the people of God.

We preach Christ. Then let us also manifest the love of Christ!

THE RESULT OF THE FELLOWSHIP

The result of our fellowship with God who is righteous is that we have confidence and assurance.

1. We have assurance in fellowship.

3:19. We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him,

3:20. in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

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

I am thankful for that word “know,” which shows there is no doubting or questioning. This is not talking about assurance of salvation. This verse is speaking about assurance of the fact that we are in fellowship with God so that we have a boldness before God based on a walk with the righteous God.

“If our heart condemn us . . .” When we come before God, our heart is going to be convicted if there is failure or any disobedience to His Word. God is greater than our heart. If we know what we have done, certainly God knows what we have done. If we come into the presence of God and feel condemned, it is because we are out of fellowship and are walking apart from Him. We cannot hide anything from Him. He knows all things. He longs for our heart to respond to His heart. We are to confess our sin to Him as we learned in 1 John 1:9. He has promised to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“If our heart condemn us not . . .” If there is nothing between our heart and God's heart, then we have boldness and confidence before God. This is not a demanding spirit but an attitude of worship

and of humility. We come as the children of God but still His creatures.

There is a reverence and awe and worship in fellowship with God. There is also a peace and a confidence before God. The best way to describe it is to give an illustration from the Scripture.

In the book of Exodus, chapters 32 and 33, we are told something of the relationship between God and Moses. God had brought the people of Israel out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. They had been brought through the Red Sea, miraculously fed, given water in the wilderness by God. Then Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Lord's law.

Meanwhile, Aaron and the people made a molten calf and worshiped it. God was displeased and told Moses that He would blot out this idolatrous nation and make a great nation of Moses.

Moses said to God, "You cannot do that. Then your promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would not avail. Furthermore, what would the Egyptians say? You would be dishonored among the nations of the earth."

Notice the boldness of Moses. He pleaded with God on the basis of God's promises and the glory of His Person. And the Lord heard the prayer of Moses.

Then the Lord promised Moses, "My presence shall be with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Ex. 33:14). Again, notice the boldness and the confidence of Moses as he asks God to show him His glory. Fellowship with the eternal God brings such confidence.

Oh, that we might come before God with such openness of heart! If you have failed God, remember He has made the provision for you to be forgiven and cleansed. If your heart condemns you in His presence, why don't you confess your sin and be cleansed from all unrighteousness? Then you can go on to enjoy the day in fellowship with God.

2. Another result of fellowship with God who is righteous is assurance in prayer.

3:22. And whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

When we are walking in fellowship with God, all doubts are removed and we will come to Him in prayer.

Communion with God excludes all false petitions. We will not want that which is outside the will of God but will seek to please Him. Whatsoever we ask of Him we will receive because we are obedient to His Word and because we trust Him. What are His commandments to us?

The next verse tells us.

3:23. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

Let us look ahead in this same Epistle to another expression of this same confidence in prayer.

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him (1 John 5:14,15).

People often say to me, "I stood on these prayer promises and God didn't answer me."

May I ask some questions?

What did you ask for?

Did you ask according to His will (1 John 5:14)?

Did you ask those things that are pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22)?

Were you asking for your own selfish purposes or for His honor and praise and glory?

Let us consider the Scriptures that give us the ground for answered requests.

And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.

Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.

These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father in your behalf;

for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father (John 16: 23-28).

Jesus is saying, "In that day," that is, in the day when the Spirit of God indwells you, "you shall ask me nothing."

Why is this?

It is because in that day "you shall ask the Father in My name." Jesus mentions the Father six times in six verses. Our Lord is emphasizing this. It is because of relationship to the Father that our Lord is not going to make our requests for us. *The Father Himself loves us.*

We can come into the presence of the Father in all the righteousness and beauty of our Saviour, and thus we may come with confidence. If there is nothing between us and the Father, then Jesus says, "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, he will give it you."

I am going to be bold enough to state that if we come to the Father under these conditions, we will invariably pray in the will of God. I believe this is what it means in Jude 20, "*Praying in the Holy Spirit.*"

We can have a confidence, a rest, an assurance in the presence of God so that we are not afraid to make our requests because He loves us. Did you mark this? Not because we love Him but because He loves us! "*For the Father Himself loves you.*"

When we make our request, there must be nothing between us and the Father, nothing for our heart to condemn.

The Lord Jesus sets forth another condition for answered prayer,

And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me any thing in My name, I will do it (John 14:13,14).

Here is another sure promise, but it does require our obedience. Do we make our requests so that the father will be glorified in the Son?

The Lord is telling us that we have this tremendous resource of coming into the presence of God in order that we might manifest to the world the character, the heart, the love, and the compassion of God.

An exegesis of this chapter would point out that Jesus is answering the request, "*Show us the Father.*" He tells of the resources that we have, and one of these is prayer. When we, as Christians, walk in fellowship with God, then by the Spirit of God we get to know His will. Then our will and our wish will be that the Father might be glorified in Jesus Christ in the midst of men.

Let us consider another condition.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you (John 15:7).

Are we abiding in Him?

Is His Word abiding in us? *Then*, we ask what we will.

Well, then what will our desire be? What would we pray?

We will pray His will! He will put His desire into our hearts. Then, as we pray in the Spirit of God, He answers that prayer. Invariably! Because it is prayed through the Spirit of God in an obedient heart!

As we walk in fellowship with the Saviour, by the Spirit of God, we come to know the desires of

God's heart. Then, in cooperation with Him, we use prayer, that tool, that channel, that weapon which God has given us. We become instruments in the hands of God for the performance of His will and the carrying out of His purpose for the glorifying of His Son among men.

The Christian has two great weapons from God. One is the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. It is by the Word of God that people are brought to Christ. It is by the Word of God that the Christians are cleansed. The other weapon is prayer. Prayer is the instrument by which we touch the sovereign, omnipotent God who has all authority in heaven and in earth.

We Christians have a tremendous responsibility to pray for our country and government and all in authority. We should pray that the church of Christ may realize its position and place, carrying to the world the wonderful story of redeeming grace. We should pray for the world. We cannot read the Bible without realizing that prayer is the weapon which God has put into the hands of His children. Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah and for Abimelech and his nation. Moses pleaded for Israel. Job prayed for his friends. Ezra, Daniel, Jeremiah prayed for their people.

We need to know these truths concerning prayer so that we do not become discouraged and disheartened in our praying. The Lord loves us with an everlasting love. Nothing delights Him more than that His children come to Him with their requests, with their worship, and with their praises. We come in humility before a loving, eternal, sovereign God, knowing that He is able to work out His own purposes. We can touch the throne of God. What a privilege is ours.

- 3. The third result of fellowship with God who is righteous is that we have assurance because of our union with Him.*

We have been looking at the requirements for effectual prayer and found the two specific commandments in verse 23. We should believe on the

name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and we should love one another. This, then, leads to the ground for our confidence, which is our union with Him.

3:24. And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Here is the fact of our amazing union with Christ. Our Lord said the same thing in John 14.

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

that is the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

After a little while, the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also.

In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you (John 14:16-20).

“At that day” again refers to the day when the Spirit of God will indwell you. Because He is abiding in us by His Spirit, we have this wonderful union between the Saviour and His people, and this gives us confidence to come into the presence of God.

Many of God's people who love the Saviour really know so little about our bond with Him.

The same union that Jesus has with the Father is the union that Jesus has with us. What confidence! What assurance! What joy!

We are eternally, completely, absolutely joined to the Son of God. There is no power on earth or in hell that can break that relationship and that union. If this would ever grip our hearts as it should, we would be an entirely different people.

1 John 2:28 has the same thought of standing before Him with confidence and not being ashamed before Him at His coming. This is what God wants of you and of me. Because of our union with Him, we can have this confidence, this assur-

ance, this boldness. Our Lord told us in John 4:23 that the Father is seeking worshipers.

The first thing that He wants from His people is worship. That is why the Saviour asked Peter three times in John 21, "Peter, do you love Me?"

He didn't ask Peter whether he would serve Him or do this thing or that thing. The all-important question is whether we *love Him*. Everything else will come as an outflow of a love for the Saviour.

We need to get back to basic, foundational truth. We have confidence not only because our sins have been put away, not only because we can come into His presence as His children, not only because we stand before God in all the beauty and righteousness of Christ, but also because of our union with our Saviour.

His life has become our life.

His desire has become our desire.

His will has become our will.

His purpose has become our purpose.

We are going to cooperate with Him whatever *He* wants. This is Christianity in action. This is our love for *Him* in action.

Some people become so occupied with an experience they have had that they shut out the presence of the Saviour. They talk about experience but are ignorant of the Word of God and of this wonderful union with the Saviour. That is a life on the level of shallow emotionalism. It is true that God has given us emotions, but let us not live in emotionalism. Let us get down to the very heart of God, to the reality of our union with the Saviour. Let us stop playing at being religious, and let us walk with God and become available to Him. Then He will find us channels through whom He can display Himself to the hearts and lives of men and women on the earth.

Now let us take a quick overview of this chapter.

In the first three verses, we had the encouragement to have fellowship with God who is righteous. There is a present encouragement because we are now His children. There is a future encourage-

ment, for His purpose will be completed and we shall all be conformed to the image of His Son. Everyone who has this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure.

The opposition to the fellowship was set forth in verses 4-13. We are exhorted not to marvel if we are hated by the world. The world had no place for Christ and never understood Him.

The world could only cast Him out. So we are not to be surprised when we follow the Lord Jesus to find that this same old world will not want us either.

The evidence of fellowship with God who is righteous is love for the brethren, verses 14-18. God calls us to reality. We are not to love only in word but also in deed.

Verses 19-24 show us the assurance in fellowship because God has made provision to remove the barrier that has broken fellowship. We can have assurance in prayer, confidence to come to the throne of grace and know that He is going to meet our needs because the Father loves us and because we are in union with Jesus Christ. There is no power on earth or hell that can break that union with Him because the Spirit of God indwells us.

May the Lord make these wonderful truths very precious to your hearts. May you know something of the wonder of fellowship and union with the Son of God.

THE TEST OF THE FELLOWSHIP

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

4:2. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

4:3. and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

4:4. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world.

4:5. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

4:6. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

God asks us to test people. We are to use spiritual discernment because many false prophets are gone out into the world. How can we do this? One man says the Bible teaches this, and another man says the Bible teaches that. Someone else says the Bible is not to be trusted at all. How can we know that which is of God and that which is not of God?

We are to test a person on the basis of what he confesses about the *Person of Jesus Christ*.

4:2. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

4:3. and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

When John wrote this Epistle, he was facing what is known as Gnosticism. The Gnostics were those who believed that Jesus Christ was an emanation from God, a created being. They considered Him to be higher than the angels but not truly God, not God manifest in the flesh. Their ground for this was that they believed the flesh to be evil. Of course, we can agree with that. The desires of our flesh are evil and get us into trouble. So they asked how a holy God could be made manifest in that which is evil.

John faces this question: Who are those who are true?

Who are those who really believe the Word of God?

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

Permit me to change the wording. Everyone who confesses that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate is of God.

Both John and Peter declared that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh.

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

Later, on the Isle of Patmos, John saw Jesus in His glory.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. (Revelation 1:17,18).

Peter writes,

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty (2 Pet. 1:16).

Do not try to say that Jesus Christ did not make that same claim! In the fifth chapter of John, the Jews said to Him in effect, "Who do You think You are? God?" And they sought to kill Him.

He answered them, "Yes! My Father has the authority to raise the dead and make them alive. That is exactly what I can do!"

We read at the end of John, chapter 8, that when Jesus said to the Jews of His day, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad," the Jews knew exactly what He was talking about.

Then said the Jews unto Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

His answer to them was, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

I am!

Jehovah!

I am the eternal God.

So the Jews tried to kill Him.

That person who denies that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh is not of God.

I say very bluntly that a great many ecclesiastical leaders in our country are not Christian because they deny the Incarnate Word of God. Let me say that if Jesus Christ is not God Incarnate, if He is not the sinless Son of God, then we do not have a Saviour. Then He had to die for His own sin and could not have died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

This is precisely what these people are saying. They teach that when He died on the cross, He died as a martyr. They take the very words of Scripture and twist them to deceive the people of God.

Remember that in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 we are told that Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, and that *his* servants will come as servants of righteousness. The Word of God declares that we are to try the spirits to see if they are of God.

In chapter three of 1 John we studied the contrast between two families, the children of God and the children of the devil. Here we find a contrast between two spirits, the spirit of Christ and the spirit of antichrist. *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*

The contrast to this is the spirit of antichrist. We have already learned that this exists (1 John 2:18). Now it is defined as the denial that Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word of God. So we find that we can test the character of those who claim to speak for God on the basis of what they teach and believe about the person of Jesus Christ.

May I remind you again that Satan will come as an angel of light and that Satan's servants come as the servants of righteousness for the purpose of

deceiving the people of God. There is abundant evidence of this in the Scriptures. There is an abundance of counterfeiting of truth everywhere. Our Lord in Matthew 13:24-30 speaks the parable of the wheat and the tares. They both grow together until the harvest.

In Exodus we find Moses, the servant of God, performing miracles; and immediately Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8), who were the magicians of Pharaoh, tried to imitate the things that Moses did. In Acts 8 Simon the sorcerer wanted to imitate Philip and Peter. In Acts 13 Paul is opposed by Elymas, the sorcerer.

Listen to the Apostle Peter.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. . . . These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.; (2 Peter 2:1 and 17).

Then in 2 Peter 3:3-5 he goes on to point out that they are willingly ignorant. They do not want to know the truth. Mark these things!

Our Saviour gave His disciples a stern warning:

“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name?’ . . . then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you’” (Matthew 7:22-23).

There are people who profess to be preachers, who profess to perform miracles in the name of Christ, and yet our Saviour will say, “I never knew you.”

John is making it very, very clear to us. You see, one can *profess* knowledge of a fact and not accept it. We read “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” *Confesses!* This is a relationship by faith with the person of Jesus Christ. The issue is always Christ. Is He God who took His place in the human family? *The*

Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh (John 1:1,14).

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. In Him all the fulness of God is revealed. By Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-19). The fulness of the Deity dwells in Him bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3)(the express image of His person KJV). The great question is the position that is given to Christ. Is HE the center of all? Is this Jesus of Nazareth confessed to be God manifest in the flesh, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:22 and 36). This is the issue.

Preachers may have enthusiasm and showmanship, but if they say that Jesus is just a prophet, a teacher, an ideal, and deny His person and His deity, then they have the spirit of antichrist. When we see religious leaders hating the Word of God and rebelling against the person of Christ, we know they have imbibed the spirit of antichrist.

When leaders who deny the person of Christ advocate immorality and corruption, lawlessness and rebellion, then we are seeing the world preparing for the coming of the man of sin, the antichrist. He will be the personification of Satan.

Just as our Saviour is God who was manifest in the flesh, so the antichrist will be the devil incarnate. He is going to gather the nations together and make war against the Saviour (Revelation 13 and 20). Satan and all his disciples hate God, hate the Son of God, hate the people of God, hate the Word of God. Let us not be deluded. The issue is very clear. If we stand for the Saviour, it is going to cost us something.

Since we are to take our place and stand for the Person of Christ against the world around us, there is a word of encouragement for us.

4:4. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Our Lord has already conquered the powers of darkness. The victory is already assured. The

Spirit of God who indwells you is greater than the prince of this world, the god of this age.

I want to tell you very frankly and joyfully that when one accepts the Saviour he has a relationship with the Saviour, and the Spirit of God indwells him. Greater is He, the Spirit of God, that is in you than he that is in the world. The Spirit of God is greater than any other force in the world or in hell, and so the victory is guaranteed.

First Corinthians 6:15 gives us this same assurance. If we love the Saviour, our bodies become members of Christ, and verse 19 states that we become the sanctuary of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us. It is the presence of this indwelling Spirit of God that guarantees the victory.

I love the testimony of a man who had been a slave to drink, a down-and-out alcoholic. He accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and one day someone said to him, "So you have the mastery over the devil at last."

"No!" he said, "No, but I have in me the Master who has conquered the devil."

Of our own strength we cannot overcome sin, or the devil, or the world. But there is in the one who accepts the Saviour the Spirit of God, and "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." You are of God, little children, and *have overcome* them.

We have been dealing with the fact that we are to test the spirits by testing their character. We test those who claim to speak for God on the basis of their belief about the person of Jesus Christ. Now we learn that we are also to test them on the basis of their *witness*. We are to determine the source and the effect of their witness.

4:5. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

4:6. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We are to test not only the messenger but also the message. Those who have the spirit of anti-christ, those who deny the Incarnate Word of God, are of the world. And the effect of their witness is that the world hears them. When we hear someone preach or teach, we need to discern whether the source of their teaching is of the world.

Is it of Satan, the prince and god of this world? We can determine this because the world loves its own. The world speaks of its own. The world exalts man instead of exalting Christ. For the world, man is the center of attraction.

We find in the world a rebellion against God because man wants to be the center. So people of the world are confused. Satan sees to it that they are confused. And I would say to you, until they have their faith and their love centered in the Saviour, they will continue to be confused.

People who are not of God belong to the world. They are of the world. They will gladly hear the world. They do not want to hear the things of God. In contrast, the believer loves to hear the message from God.

Therefore, we have a criterion by which we may test any witness that we hear. *The message of the world will make man the center. The message from the Spirit of God will always make Christ the center.*

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative; but whatever He hears, He will speak: and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you” (John 16:13,14).

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Jesus, speaking of Himself and His work, told his disciples, **“You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48).**

May I add here that the Word of God is the standard of truth. When you choose a church, be sure it is one where the worship of Christ is the central attraction and where you will be taught the Word of God. It is His Word that must be the rule and guide.

Proof Texts

I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, and give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; for Thou hast magnified Thy word according to all Thy name (Psalm 138:2).

In the revised text this is translated, **Thou hast underwritten every word by Thy name.**

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Now these (the Bereans) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good (I Thessalonians 5:21).

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHO IS LOVE

The reason why so many people despise the God of love and have so little appreciation of the God of love is that they have never seen that God is righteous. The more we see the holy character of God, the more we will appreciate His love. There could be no display of His love without first of all a display of His righteous character. The gospel message does not reveal that God is love apart from the truth that God is righteous.

- **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16,17).**
- **And this is the message we have heard from Him, and announce to you, that God is light (1 John 1:5).**
- **For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).**

God must deal with sin in judgment, in righteousness and in holiness. The only reason we can come into the presence of a holy God is because *His righteous character has been vindicated by His Son at the cross.*

This is guaranteed to us by the resurrection.

Because of this, we can enjoy fellowship with God who is holy, who is righteous, and who is love.

DIVINE LOVE MANIFESTED

4:7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

4:8. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

4:9. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

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

We notice John's declaration of the fact that God is love. Our generation is very confused about the difference between love and lust. Many people think that immorality and moral corruption are not bad so long as people "love" each other. Some ecclesiastical leaders teach situation ethics. Isn't it really situation immorality?

We need to read 1 Corinthians 13 to learn what love is and to find how God describes love.

"Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (I Corinthians 12:4-8).

Can a woman forget her nursing child, And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you (Isaiah 49:15).

If we love the Saviour, He will never leave us. Whatever we may be, His love is never affected by our frailty or weaknesses or failures. He loves us with an everlasting love.

Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end (John 13:1).

If the truth that every real believer in the Saviour is the object of His love and of His affection would

really get hold of our hearts, then we would begin to love His people. Love responds to love.

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

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (John 15:12).

It is divine love that has been shed abroad in our hearts according to Romans 5:5:

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In other words, there *has been imparted to us divine love as well as divine life.*

May I plead with your heart, let us love one another. There are hundreds of Christians who are lonely, longing for a little manifestation of love from other Christians. They might not be very lovable, but perhaps this is because they need love. I know it is easy for us to love somebody who loves us, but God loves us even when we are unlovely and unlovable.

4:10. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.

The very energy of God’s nature to man is love.
Next, John shows to us the manifestation of that love.

4:9. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him.

4:10. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

People come to me and say, “Mr. Mitchell, I am not a pagan. I believe in God. I have my God and you have yours.”

Then I ask them, "What kind of a God do you have?"

They will say that their God is a God of love.

Then I ask them, "How do you know that your God is love?"

You see, my friend, apart from the Scriptures, apart from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, there is no revelation that God is love.

We do not find love in nature. One animal preys on another, and one fish feeds on another fish. No, we do not find love displayed in nature. There it is the survival of the fittest.

The great manifestation of the love of God was when He sent His only begotten Son into the world for us. If we reject Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh, if we say that Jesus Christ is not the Incarnate Word of God, then we have no basis to declare that God is love. God has manifested His love in Christ Jesus.

Love must have an object upon which to display itself. *We are the object of God's love.* It is an active love, and it is manifested by sacrifice. It is divine love. It is love which God extended to us even when we were unlovely and unlovable.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

4:10. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

May I suggest this to your thinking? We manifest our love for God by our obedience to His Word. We found that in chapter two. In chapter three we leaned that we manifest our love for each other by sacrifice. We do that though an imparted, divine love.

Here we find that God manifested or displayed His love for us by sending His only begotten Son into the world to die for us.

Has it penetrated your heart that God loved you enough to send His Son to die for you?

Do you know that God sent Jesus, heaven's best, to die on the cross to put away your sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and then God raised Him from the dead and put Him at His own right hand and gave Him glory so that *your* faith might be in God (I Peter 1:18-21)?

The purpose of this sacrifice made by God was that we might live.

4:9b. That God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

God sent His Son on a mission. That mission was to take men who were *dead* in trespasses and sins and to transform them into children of God who should *live* with Him eternally. I know of no message on God's earth that has such hope and love and joy and peace and satisfaction for the human heart. All that we need to do is to accept this divine gift which God has given to us and is now offering to us.

For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

Allow me to stop here for a moment and spend some time on these two verses in the Epistle of John since they are the very heart of the gospel.

It is so frequently found that people think of the love of God and forget His righteousness and His holiness. These verses tell us how God can still be righteous and yet manifest His love to us, men and women who are unrighteous and have sinned. God cannot save people at the expense of His righteousness. Then He would not longer be righteous.

There must be a putting away of sin and a satisfaction of the divine righteousness before God

could ever save a single sinner. What righteousness could not do, love has done. *Love provided the sacrifice.* Love has provided a Saviour. The Saviour satisfies (propitiates) the righteous character of God and the demands of His righteous law.

This makes it possible for us to experience His love. Before God could ever open up His heart and open up His arms to receive men and women in their sins, His character had to be satisfied. His righteousness had to be vindicated. This is what our Saviour accomplished at the cross.

I am persuaded that there is so little appreciation for the love of God today because men have never seen the God who is absolute in righteousness and holiness.

In order to emphasize the fact that the Son of God was sent on a mission, I want to call your attention to another study.

John is the only one who calls Jesus "the only begotten Son of God." Five times in the New Testament, and only in John's writing, do we find this name. He is emphasizing that this is the One who is God, manifest in the flesh, the only begotten Son of God.

We find it in John 1:14; John 1:18; John 3:16; and 1 John 4:9. Incidentally, John is also the only one who calls Him the "Lamb of God." We find that in John 1:29, John 1:36, and 27 times in the book of Revelation. Men will be judged in the presence of the Lamb of God.

Isaiah also emphasizes the fact that the Son of God was sent on a mission.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us (Isaiah 9:6).

Notice that the child was born, a real man coming through a human mother. But the Son was given. He was sent.

John, in his Gospel, emphasizes that the only begotten Son was never born. He was sent. Approximately 40 times in that Gospel we read that He was sent on a mission for a distinct purpose. Even as a boy of twelve, He knew that He must be about His Father's business. Later, Jesus said, "I

glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John 17:4). When the mission was accomplished. He cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

His mission was to take men who were dead in trespasses and sins and to transform them so that "we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). And by the way, the life which God gives through Him is *everlasting life*.

The moment a child is born into the world, he is under the sentence of death. We were all born with the seed of death in us.

Jesus came into the world that men might live forever, that we might live through HIM.

This is the great theme of the Gospel through John.

Proof Texts

- **In Him was life (John 1:4)**
- **". . . should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16)**
- **The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life (John 4:14).**
- **He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5:24).**
- **If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever (John 6:51).**

- **If anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death (John 8:51).**
- **I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly (John 10:10).**
- **I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).**
- **I am the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6).**
- **But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that**

believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).

This is the glorious answer to a human race that was under the sentence of eternal death.

This is the answer to the question of the ages. Job, centuries ago, said there is hope for the tree, for if it is cut down, it will sprout again. But he wondered about man.

If a man dies, will he live again? (Job 14:14).

The answer is that we have life through union with Jesus Christ. Christ means eternal life, abundant life, satisfying life, resurrection life, indwelling life. Not to have Christ means not to have life. *In Him is life.*

How can we live forever when we were born in sin? Not only do we need life but we also need to be rid of our sins. A man cannot stand in the presence of God when he is sinful. John gives us the answer.

4:10. He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

He sent His Son as a sacrifice to put away sin at the cross. He is the propitiation, the satisfaction, for our sins. *God is satisfied.*

- **Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).**
- **When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).**
- **Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22).**
- **But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12).**
- **For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).**

- **All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him (Isaiah 53:6).**
- **And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin, and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (1 Peter 2:24).**
- **And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin (1 John 3:5).**
- **Now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).**

How could I possibly have eternal life when I am dead in sins? Something must happen to those sins. Either I must die for them or someone else must die in my place.

Isn't it wonderful that He came not only to give us life but also to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? No one can ever produce any evidence in the presence of God to show that a believer has ever sinned. You see, our Saviour didn't just cover our sins. He put them away, once, for all, forever.

- **But through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12).**
- **One sacrifice for sins for all time (Hebrews 10:12).**
- **So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many; shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin to those who eagerly await Him (Hebrews 9:28).**

He came the first time to put away sin. He came the first time to make provision whereby we might be fitted for the presence of God. He came the first time as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He is coming again, and then it will be to judge sinners. In flaming fire He is going to take vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thessalonians 1:8). When He comes the second time, the Lamb of God will be the Judge.

Have you accepted Him? He became an accursed thing so that you might be saved. My yearning is that you might have a tremendous love for the Saviour. May your love be so great and so wonderful that people will be attracted to the One who put away sin, so that they may receive the Saviour and pass from death to life.

ASSURANCE OF OUR UNION WITH HIM

How can we know that we are in union with the Saviour? How can we know that we are in fellowship with God who is love? The apostle gives to us four definite assurances.

1. We know because of our love for His people.

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

4:12. No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Our relationship with God makes us right in our relationship with men. I can know that I am in right relationship with God when I am in right relationship with my brethren. One is the outflow of the other. Our love for God is displayed by our love for the brethren. If this is not true, then love is just an empty word.

God did not start to love us when we accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. He loved us when we were sinners. He loved us when we hated Him, when we were afar from Him, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, without hope, without God.

He demonstrated His love by sacrifice, and He gave His Son to die for us. When we accept the Saviour, that same love which gave His Son to die for us is manifested through us to others. *Our love for God is displayed by obedience to His Word. Our love for each other is displayed by sacrifice.* This is the recurring theme through the Epistle of John.

2. *We know because He has given to us His Spirit.*

11. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

There are other Scriptures which state that the Spirit of God dwells in the believer in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God.

- **And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you (John 14:16,17).**
- **Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).**
- **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19).**
- **And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (1 John 3:24).**

By our love for others we know that *the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:5).*

Remember, *God sees my faith, but men experience my love.* As we walk with God, His love is perfected in us so that the character of God is revealed through us in our actions toward others. The very fact that we love the people of God evidences that we are walking in fellowship with God. The ability to love must come from God Himself and is part of the fruit of the Spirit of God in His people.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control; against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22,23).

Someone has stated it this way: the fruit of the Spirit is love manifested by joy, peace, patience, etc. This is divine love. If we truly love God, then we will have divine love in our hearts and lives, and there will be a display of that love by obedience to His Word and by sacrifice for others.

When our Lord was living among men, He said,

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

John said, **“No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained him” (John 1:18).**

How are men going to see God today? How are men going to know that God is love today? It must be through His people! This is not just theory, this is real life.

When we come into the experience of life in Christ, His life is demonstrated through us by the Spirit of God who indwells us. This produces our obedience to His Word and our love for the brethren, a love which is willing to sacrifice one for the other. This is our assurance. This is how we know that we are in fellowship with God who is love.

3. *We know because of our confession of His Person.*

12. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world

13. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God.

The value of the cross of Christ is dependent upon *who* died on that cross. It was not just a man who died for us, but it was the Son of God. The very fact that we testify that it was God's Son whom God sent into the world to be the Saviour of sinners is evidence of our union with God, evi-

dence of our life in Him. The Spirit of God in us is displayed through our love of God and our love of the brethren and our confession that Jesus is the Son of God. This gives us our assurance.

4. We know because we are dwelling in His love.

4:16. And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

4:17. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

4:18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment. and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

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

What a wonderful, wonderful truth this is! When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we were joined to Him in an intimate union. We have been made partakers of life, His divine life. We are joined to the Son of God. God never for one moment sees us without His Son. When we stand in the presence of God, we stand in all the beauty and righteousness and glory of Christ. What an assurance this union gives for the life of the believer!

One of the great purposes of redemption was that God might have a people with whom He could have fellowship. Did you ever think of the anticipation of God when His children are ready for glory?

Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones (Psa. 116:15).

God is anxious for them, waiting for them to come home. God has forgiven them, saved them, given them eternal life, made them His children. They have been tested and tried and refined while upon earth. God has used them in one way or another for the glorifying of His person and for the

manifestation of His grace and His love and His compassion. And then He brings them home. Isn't this cause for assurance?

Think on these things. Lay hold of the assurance God gives to us.

We know we have His life abiding in us, not only an imparted life but also an imparted love.

We know we have His Spirit dwelling in us.

We know we love Him and love His people.

We know we belong to Him by our union with God. We dwell in love because God is love. We dwell in God and God in us and so we dwell in love.

The result of this should be a boldness before God. Perfect love has made provision for the believer to have confidence and boldness in the presence of God.

17. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

We find this same thought in the book of Hebrews.

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

We who are creatures of the dust can have real, intimate fellowship with God.

Divine love, imparted to us, guarantees the perfection of His purpose in His people. We have three glorious proofs of love making perfect. Let us look at them.

One, in chapter two, we found that because we love Him and belong to Him we live in obedience to His Word.

But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him (1 John 2:5)

This is our relationship to God.

Two, in chapter four, we found that His love is perfected in us in our manifestation of love for the people of God.

If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us (1 John 4:12).

This is in our relationship to self.

Three, notice, it does not say as He is, so will we be when we get to heaven. We all would believe that. The Bible clearly states that when we see Him, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2). God has determined that we are going to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). Oh, yes, when we get to heaven, we will never fail Him.

But this verse 17 is saying that just as He is, so are we now.

In this world!

This is our position in Christ. This is our relationship.

Death, sin, judgment are all behind us. No one can produce any evidence in the presence of God that we were sinners. His perfect love has made a perfect provision for us to come into His presence. Hence, we have boldness.

Death, sin, judgment are all in the past. When we stand before God, we stand before Him without sin. We stand in the righteousness of Christ. This gives us peace of heart, boldness, confidence. God has made a marvelous provision for us in His Son, and it is beyond the comprehension of men.

If we wait until we can analyze and understand all the program and purpose of God in man's redemption, we will wait until it is too late. In fact, one cannot know until one first accepts the Saviour.

When we accept Jesus Christ, the door is flung open by the Spirit of God, and He keeps and

guides us into all truth. He makes the things of Christ very real to us.

I love this 17th verse. It was one of the first verses I learned when I became a Christian. It was so beyond me I could hardly believe that it was in the Bible. Yet, here it stands in the word of God.

As He is, so also are we in this world.

Someone may ask why I don't talk about Christian service. Doesn't that come in here somewhere? Service is the outflow of our fellowship with the Saviour, our relationship to Him. The more we walk with Him, the more gladly we serve Him.

Otherwise we get occupied with self, become indifferent to Him, and service becomes a burden. It is so easy for all of us to allow things to interfere with our own intimate fellowship with God and our walk with Him.

Yet this should always be our first concern.

The perfect provision that God has made for us, whereby we can fully enjoy that fellowship with Him, is that "perfect love casts out fear."

Christianity is not a religion of fear.

I recognize there are those who try to scare people into obedience to God by calling the judgment and wrath of God upon them.

I find so many Christians who are fearful about coming into the presence of God, not sure about their eternal destiny. The reason they are not sure is that they look at themselves, their works, their service, their failures.

They become so occupied with their weaknesses that they are miserable. There is a terrible fruitage from self-occupation and introspection. Not only does it produce selfishness and egotism but also discouragement.

By the way, Satan doesn't mind a bit if we get occupied with ourselves and our accomplishments. Our accomplishments may make us proud and our failures may make us discouraged. Satan doesn't care which it is, so long as we are not oc-

cupied with the Saviour. When we get our eyes on Christ, we find the One whom God accepts and we are accepted in the Beloved.

God never sees us apart from His Son. In Christ we can have perfect peace.

Proof Texts

- **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful (John 14:27).**
- **These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation: but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).**
- **He Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:14).**
- **Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (I Thessalonians 5:23,24).**

Fear and love do not go together. The more we look at ourselves and at each other, the more we find fault and become fearful. The more we love the Saviour and are occupied with Him, the more we will experience perfect peace. Let us read the Word of God to see the Saviour, to understand what kind of Father we have, and to know His provision for all our needs. Then love will replace our fears. Perfect peace and full joy is found in Jesus Christ, our wonderful Saviour.

LOVE MANIFESTED IN HIS CHILDREN

We love Him because He first loved us. Love responds to love. We love the brethren because He commanded us to do so and we manifest our love to God by our obedience to His command.

4:20. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

4:21. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Let us note this very carefully. In John 15:15-17, Jesus **calls** us to be friends. He has **chosen** us and ordained us that we should go and bring forth fruit. He **commands** us to love one another as He has loved us.

Don't twist these around. We must love the people of God because He commands it. If we love Him, we will love His children.

Satan takes great delight in breaking up the assemblies of God's people by destroying their love the one for the other. I'm sorry to say that we see bitterness, envy, jealousy even among God's wonderful people.

Churches have been broken, not because of their love for the truth, but because of personalities. Yet, we know that the Lord always loves us. Even though we are in frailty, weakness and failure, His love for us is not affected.

Now Jesus commands us to love the brethren just as He loves us.

Our reaction is to say that such love is impossible for us. It is a supernatural love. That is correct. But Romans 5:5 tells us that divine love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It was noted that in the early church they loved one another. Cannot we demonstrate this same love? If we do not love the brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

Our next reaction may be to say we just don't feel like it. That also may be true. Then we should go look in the mirror and marvel at the grace of God that He could love even us.

Love covers a multitude of sins (I Pet. 4:8). Instead of criticizing and judging people, we are to love them. God has given us that divine love by His Spirit so that we can manifest supernatural love.

We are to manifest our love for the Saviour by loving the people of God—the “ornery” as well as the lovely ones, regardless of age or circumstance or experience. If we have trouble doing that, then let us get on our knees and pray for them.

Another way in which we may try to excuse ourselves is that we may be inclined to rationalize by asking who is our brother. John immediately goes on to define this for us.

5:1. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

The basis of our brotherhood, of our fellowship, is *divine life*. Ecclesiastical distinctions are not the basis. Anyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a brother. Notice it states that a brother is whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed of God. It is the Christ who died, who was sent to be the propitiation for our sins.

May I say again, the importance of the cross is *who* died on the cross.

The brethren are those who are trusting the work of the Christ who died on the cross. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ and accepts Him as his own personal Saviour is born of God. That is divine life. Being born of God, he will love God; and, loving God, he will love the *people* of God. The reality of divine life is seen in obedience to His commandment.

All who have put their trust in the Saviour have the same life, the same salvation, the same faith, the same love, the same standing, the same relationship. Now it is true that one may have a weak faith and another a strong faith, but whoever confesses Christ as Saviour belongs to His family.

We may have different shades of doctrine, but that does not mean that we should not love one another, nor does it mean that we cannot have fellowship together.

According to Ephesians 4:1-6, there is a unity of the Spirit based on the foundation of one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Fa-

ther of all. If we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is God manifest in the flesh, that He died to put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, that He was buried, that He was raised from the dead with the body that was nailed to the cross, that He has gone back to heaven to be a Prince and a Saviour, that He will return to the earth and will reign in power and great glory, then we are brothers!

Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

If we love God, we will love the children of God, all those who are born of God. This is what Jesus said,

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).

The outflow of our love for the Saviour is our love for the brethren. Remember, God sees our faith but men experience our love. Our love for God is manifested by obedience, but our love for other Christians is manifested by sacrifice.

God has given us the responsibility of loving the people of God and of obeying the Word of God, but we experience divine life and fellowship with God when we love the people of God and when we obey His Word.

So John uses that word "know" again.

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

Now John goes on to explain about the commandments of God.

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

The man out of Christ has his tests, his sorrows, his trials, his sufferings, his disappointments, his afflictions.

On whom can he lean?

Where can he turn?

What hope does he have when he faces death, the last enemy of man?

Many people are afraid to become a Christian because they fear they might have to give up certain things. They are afraid they cannot do certain things or go certain places.

Our verse tells us, however, that this is the love of God that we keep His Word, and His Word is not grievous. It never becomes a burden.

Christians also go through their tests and trials and sorrows, but there is a difference. Christians have an imparted divine life and an imparted divine love. The one who has accepted the Saviour faces his tests in union with the living God.

The possibility is that the more closely one walks with God in this world, the more tests and trials that person will have. It is through the tests and trials that the believer experiences the power of God and learns to know His ways, His tenderness, His compassion. Those tests, trials and afflictions become open doors for God to demonstrate His love, His power, His grace, His concern for us.

We have a Saviour who understands every test of life.

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Remember that it was in the storm that the disciples learned about the Christ whom they were following.

And the men marveled, saying, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matthew 8:27).

When people object to Christianity by saying it demands that we give up too many pleasant

things, I ask them, "Where do you find that in the Bible?"

I am afraid people think that the commandments which the Lord Jesus mentions and that John speaks of here are the Law of Moses. Please, let us not put people under the bondage of a Mosaic economy. This is not what John has in mind here.

Peter is speaking of the Law of Moses when he says,

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

The commandments of our Saviour are not grievous.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Faith not only appropriates Christ for salvation, but it appropriates Christ for victory.

5:4. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

5:5. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This reminds us of the words of our Lord:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It also reminds us of a little song:

Cheer up, ye saints of God,
There's nothing to worry about.
Nothing to make you feel afraid,
Nothing to make you doubt.

**Remember, Jesus never fails,
So why not trust Him and shout?
You'll be sorry you worried at all
Tomorrow morning!**

We have already learned about the world in 1 John 2:15-17 where we read, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . .*” The world is a system that is diametrically opposed to God. It is a religious, economic, social, political system, and God is not the center of it at all.

In the realm of religion, Satan is its god (2 Corinthians 4:4).

In the realm of government, Satan is its prince (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). We are living in an enemy world.

Then how can we overcome the world? We will find that the harder we struggle, the firmer we set our will, the more we try to do in the energy of the flesh, the more failure we experience. We are given the answer here, and it is a simple answer.

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world.

Our Saviour is none other than the Lord from heaven. Victory over the world is guaranteed to us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Allow me to take the time here to make a comparison between verses one and five. When John is defining who the brethren are, he says, *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 5:1)*. This has reference to the work on the cross.

Remember, the important issue is: Who died on the cross? When the Spirit of God speaks about the work of our Saviour on the cross, He makes it clear it is the Christ who died, The Anointed One of God. This refers to *His Work*.

When John is stating who it is that has the victory and overcomes the world, he says, *He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:5)*. This refers to *His Person*.

Notice that, when the Spirit of God is talking about the Lordship of our Saviour, it is Jesus, the Son of God. God the Father raised up this Jesus,

who had been crucified, and exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour (Acts 5:30,31). He is the resurrected One, the glorified One. Our faith is in a Saviour who is the Lord over all; and victory is guaranteed to us because He is victorious over death, the grave, and Satan.

Who is the one who overcomes? He is the one who is willing to confess that Jesus is risen and exalted on the throne, that He is none other than the Son of God.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

The overcomer is in relationship and union with the Son of God and realizes that He has already obtained the victory for us. The overcomer knows that the Son of God 1) defeated Satan at the cross and 2) robbed death of its fear and 3) has become the life of His people.

John is the only one who talks about being an overcomer. He talks about this in his letters to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3, and he mentions it here in his Epistle. There are those who say that the overcomer is the believer overcoming sin and Satan and the world. They talk about living a victorious life. However, John is careful to explain the words he uses and to tell us what they mean.

An example of John's explaining his use of a word is in the word "abide."

And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us (1 John 3:24).

In the Gospel of John we are told what it means to "abide."

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

It is true that to abide means to be in fellowship with God. But who is the one who is in fellowship? It is the one who is obedient!

So here John is careful to explain who is an overcomer.

5:5. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

We overcome all obstacles through Him that loved us (Romans 8:37-39). We overcome the enemy of our souls through the Spirit of God, and He is greater than he who is in the world.

It is the indwelling Spirit of God who guarantees victory over the enemy (1 John 4:1-6). We overcome all obstacles because of relationship with the Son of God. It is faith in His Person, believing and confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, that is the mark of an overcomer (1 John 5:4,5).

Peter and James do not use the word “overcomer.” They both do speak of the fact that in faith we are to resist the devil. Resist the devil and **he** will do the fleeing, not you.

Proof Texts

- **Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour: But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (I Peter 5:8,9).**
- **Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).**

Faith makes victory possible. Love makes it easy. It delights the heart of God.

This is really the end of the discussion, or we may call it the argument, of the Epistle. We have learned that we have fellowship with God who is light. This is the description of His character.

We have fellowship with God who is righteous, righteous not only in His character but also in His works. We have fellowship with God who is love.

How can we know that we belong to God who is love?

We know that we are in fellowship with Him because of our union with Him, because of our love for the brethren, because of our obedience to His Word, because we have victory over the world.

Our attitude to the brethren is to be one of love; our attitude to the Word of God is to be obedience; our attitude to the world is to be one of victory. This gives us the assurance of our fellowship with the eternal God. What more do we need?

Throughout the entire Epistle the great yearning of the Spirit of God and the theme of the whole book is that we might have intimate, personal daily fellowship with God.

God wants us to really believe what He says, wants us to trust Him, and wants us to be obedient to His Word. He wants each of us to say,

I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (2 Timothy 1:12).

Permit me to give a paraphrase of this:

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard the deposit which I have made with Him against that day.

The close of the Epistle gives us the results of fellowship with such a God. There are divine assurances which God Himself gives to us. There are certain truths which are absolutely immovable and unchangeable because these assurances come from God, and He is the one who stands behind them. We overcome the world through the Saviour.

Jesus Christ gets the victory and we enjoy the deliverance.

The truth stands that if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then this wonderful God, who is light and love and righteousness, makes Himself responsible for you.

He is responsible that your faith will continue.

He makes Himself responsible that your love will be enlarged. He makes it His responsibility that you will stand before Him in all the beauty of Christ. He simply asks you to believe, to put your trust, in this wonderful Saviour.

DIVINE CERTAINTIES AND ASSURANCES

5:6. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with the water and with the blood.

5:7. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

5:8. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

CERTAINTY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY

We have come now to a difficult portion of Scripture. There are varying interpretations of these verses, and so one cannot be dogmatic about them. However, I would say that the key word in the passage is "witness."

In verse six it is "the Spirit that beareth witness."

In verse seven "there are three that bear record (witness) in heaven."

In verse eight "there are three that bear witness in earth."

In other words, we are dealing here with the question of God's testimony, God's witness. This witness is certain. God is the witness to the person and work of His Son.

It is remarkable to note that our Saviour's ministry started at the River Jordan when He was baptized in water and ended at the cross where He shed His blood. I do not know exactly what is the mind of the Spirit concerning these

two, but I can make suggestions for you to follow through.

5:6. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with water only, but with the water and with the blood.

John 19:34, 35 tells us that when our Lord was crucified, the Roman soldier took his spear and pierced His side and forthwith there came out water and blood. The Spirit of God bears witness to this fact.

However, in these verses I would like to suggest that the *water* has to do with *moral* cleansing for power, for the Christian walk, for witness. This is the *manward* side of the Christian life.

The *blood* speaks of *judicial* cleansing. This is the cleansing of our sins *before God*. We need always to remember that it is not our value of the blood of Christ that saves us, but it is that great value that God has placed on the blood of His Son that saves us.

Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

In the New Testament quite often the water is spoken of as a term referring to the Word of God and is used for moral cleansing.

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).

Ephesians 5:26 states that Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church *“by the washing of water with the word.”*

The words “water” and “word” are also used for life in Christ, for relationship to the Son of God. In John 4 there can be no life apart from the Water of Life.

“The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

Peter says that we are born again *“not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is,*

through the living and abiding word of God.” (I Peter 1:23).

James tells us the same thing.

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth (James 1:18).

The Spirit of God is bearing testimony to the fact that this Jesus is the one who came by water and came by blood. The water speaks of the reception of life and of the moral cleansing through the Word. The blood speaks of the judicial cleansing which gives us our standing before God on the ground of the shed blood of Christ.

Then notice that there are three who bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. These three are one. This verse is not included in some translations of the Bible because according to some of the Greek scholars this verse was not in the original manuscripts.

Be that as it may, there is here the unity of witness in the Godhead. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are one.

In verse eight the witness here on earth is stated. The Spirit of God, the water (Word of God), and the blood (the sacrifice of Christ) agree in one. One cannot read the Bible without recognizing that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God in an open heart and thus brings the water of life freely to those who will receive it.

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (I Thessalonians 1:5).

We have received for ourselves and we preach the gospel of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that is, the blood of Christ shed for us. We use the Word of God to receive the testimony of the Saviour for ourselves and we use it to bring men to Christ. The Spirit of God takes that Word and makes it to be a living reality in any open heart.

Don't try to be mystical about the divine testimony in verses six to eight. Simply take the facts. Christ came. He poured out His life for us, and His precious blood was shed. The Spirit of God, in fact, the living God Himself, Father, Son, and Spirit, bear testimony to the fact that there is no other way of salvation but in Christ Jesus.

CERTAINTY OF ETERNAL LIFE

5:9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son.

This verse forms a transition between the certainty of God's witness and the certainty of eternal life.

The Word of God is greater than the word of men. How easy it is for us to accept the word of men. We go to school and read textbooks written by men and, if the scholars agree on some point, we accept their witness.

Then why do we approach the Word of God with such a big question mark? Why is it so much easier for people to accept the witness of men than to accept the witness of God?

One of the tragedies of our country and of so-called churches of Jesus Christ is the fact that the Word of God is questioned.

Mark this!

If the Bible is not the Word of God, then we have absolutely no revelation of the heart and character of God. We cannot know what He is or who He is or any of His purpose. Let us be very realistic about this. We can turn to creation and say that there must be a God because of the argument of design. But to know God we must have the revelation of Scripture.

John is saying in this verse that God is giving a witness concerning His Son. Are we going to believe what He says or are we going to question it?

Some folk will say that to believe it is just blind faith.

No, my friend, there is no such thing as blind faith. *Faith must have an object, otherwise it isn't faith.* The important thing is not faith but the object of faith. Are we going to believe God's Word or not?

5:9. For the witness of God is this.

Do not say, "I am going to try to believe it." That is an insult! Not believe God? How could one dare question His character and His veracity?

There is no middle ground; one either believes Him or one does not. God has spoken in no uncertain way concerning His Son and concerning the salvation He has provided for men and women. He has spoken concerning the eternal future, concerning His dealing with the nations of the earth, concerning His plan for Israel, concerning His work for the church. He has spoken concerning you and me.

And now here is His testimony:

5:10. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.

5:11. And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

5:12. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

When God speaks, He speaks concerning His Son. God's great theme and the delight of His heart are concerning His Son. At the baptism of Jesus, God said,

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased"
(Matthew 3:17).

In Matthew 17 at the transfiguration, God said, *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.”*

He is saying in effect, “Never mind Moses and never mind Elijah. My Son has come. Hear Him!” Hebrews 1:2 tells us that God “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” We must listen to what the Son has to say because God is speaking to us through Jesus Christ, His Son. If we spurn what the Son of God has said, then we are spurning the Word of God.

God holds us responsible to believe what He has said. He does not ask us to *understand* everything that He has said, but He does want us to *believe* everything that He has said. We should never doubt that God has spoken to us through His Son. Christ’s words, His life, His actions and attitudes, the very purpose for which He came, all substantiate this. As a young boy, He said,

“Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house (KJV: about my Father’s business)?” (Luke 2:49).

At the end of His life He could say, **I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the WORK which Thou hast given Me to do. . . . For the WORDS which Thou gavest Me I have given to them (John 17:4,8).**

We are responsible to hear what His Son has to say.

God is not speaking by means of angels or dreams. He has given to us a Bible to read; and in that Word by the Spirit of God there is revealed the character, the work and the person of His Son. The Father is witnessing to us through the Son.

If we want to know God, we must know Him through the Son. If we want to come to God, we must come to Him through the Son. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, is the one Mediator between God and men (I Timothy 2:5).

If you accept God’s blessed Son as your own personal Saviour, if you believe the record that God has given concerning His Son, then you are brought into relationship with Him. You have be-

come the child of One who is God. To be an obedient child of God we must know what He says. Not to believe what God has said about His Son is to make God a liar. Remember that Romans 3:4 tells us,

Let God be true, but every man a liar.

5:10. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

The Spirit of God comes to indwell that person and reveals to that person the wonderful glories of our Saviour. God sent His Son to redeem them that were under the law, so we might receive the adoption of sons; and, because we are Sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Gal. 4:4-7).

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:14,16).

When we accept the Saviour, our bodies become the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. A new thing happens in our lives, and our desires are changed. This is one of the confirmations by God to the believer through the Spirit that he has become the child of One who is God.

Let us note in review that according to 1 John 2 we know we have life because we keep His Word. In chapter 3, we know we have life because we love the brethren. In chapter 5 we know we have eternal life because we believe His Word.

5:11. And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

This is eternal life, not life for five or 10 or even 60 years. If you have put your trust in the Saviour but you do not believe that you have eternal life, you are making God a liar.

This eternal life is an imparted life, a communicated life. This life is in His Son.

"He who has the Son has the life."

- **The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).**
- **In Him was life (John 1:4).**
- **He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life (John 3:36).**

In studying the Gospel of John we find that his imparted, communicated life which He gives to us is not only eternal life, but it is satisfying life according to John 6:35 and 4:14.

It is a life over which death has no power because it is a resurrected life (John 6:39-44).

It is an indwelling life (John 6:53-58).

It is an abundant life (John 10:10).

This life is in Christ Jesus because He is the Life (John 14:6). This is the record that God has given. Eternal life is in His Son.

Let us say very frankly that there are a great, great many Christians who are not enjoying their salvation but are enduring it. They are full of fear that they might lose their salvation and lose their life in Christ. In other words, they do not believe that they have eternal life. They have accepted the Saviour and they are saved, but they are uninstructed. They do not understand the completeness of the work of Christ on the cross.

When a Christian does not believe with certainty that he has eternal life, he is casting a shadow on the work of Christ at the cross.

By his own blood he entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained an ETERNAL redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12).

When you were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, it was an eternal work which God performed. You may not now experience all that sal-

vation means, but the life you possess is an eternal life, and the salvation you possess is a complete salvation.

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

“To perform” in this verse means “to perfect it.”

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

Please do not dishonor the Son of God and the work He did for you. Do not make God to be a liar by accepting the Saviour and then doubting that you have eternal life. Do not deny the completeness of the work of Christ at the cross.

Remember it is not your value of the work of Christ at the cross, but it is the great value which God has placed on the work of His Son which gives it efficacy.

When Christ died on the cross, He did a complete job. He put away our sins and forgave every one of our sins. He defeated the powers of hell and the dominion of death and the grave. *We enjoy a complete salvation because we have a complete Saviour.*

12. He who has the Son has the life.

The difference between life and death is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour, you have eternal life and eternal glory and will spend all eternity in the presence of God.

The Son of God is mentioned eight times in verses one to thirteen. God is well pleased in His Son. He has made provision for our salvation in His Son and He has also made provision for us to be kept in that salvation.

Romans 5:1-11 teaches that the test and trials of life do not destroy faith but purify and

strengthen faith. The very love of God is the guarantee that the faith which He has given to us will never fail. I may fail and you may fail just as Peter failed, but faith does not fail. The Lord expressly prayed for Peter so that his *faith* would not fail (Luke 22:32).

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him (Hebrews 7:25).

He is able to save perfectly everyone who comes to God through Jesus Christ.

12. He who has the Son hath the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Unbelief in the Son of God and rejection of His Person and of His work leave nothing but outer darkness.

- **He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).**
- **Jesus said that whoever does not believe that He is the "I AM" shall die in his sins (John 8:24).**
- **It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).**

Those who deny the living God shall never see light (Psa. 49:16-20). How terrible! Such a man will live eternally in darkness.

God is light (1 John 1:5). If a man spurn the God who is light, then there can be nothing left but darkness.

The difference between light and darkness has nothing to do with being good or bad, being religious or irreligious. The difference lies in personal relationship with Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

God has borne testimony to His Son by raising Him from the dead. God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has

raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:31). God has marked Jesus Christ, the Son of God, out from everybody else by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:3,4).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's personal testimony that this one who was put on the cross is His Son.

Men put Him on the cross and God put Him on the throne.

Men cast Him out and heaven took Him in.

Men made Him an accursed thing and God glorified Him (Acts 2:22-24, 32-36; 5:29-31). The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's personal proof to you and to all men everywhere that this Jesus Christ is His Son.

You have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour. Is this real with you? Are you sure of eternal life? Do not depend on your feelings. Accept His gift of eternal life and enjoy it. "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life."

What a Saviour we have!

13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

A more accurate translation of the last phrase of this verse would be "even to you that believe on the name of the Son of God."

There is no questioning of faith here, for it is written to those who have believed. These things have been written so that the believer might *know* that he has eternal life. This means to know in our experience. It does not refer simply to a mental knowledge but to an experiential knowledge in life.

The Gospel of John shows how we are to receive life.

But these have been written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).

The theme of the whole Gospel of John is in chapter 1:4, "*In Him was life.*" Jesus says in John 5:26, "*as the Father has life in Himself; even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.*"

As soon as a person accepts Jesus Christ, he has entered into relationship with the Son of God and he immediately has eternal life.

In Him is life.

The Epistle of John was written so the believer may *know* that he has eternal life.

May I review it again?

In chapter 2 we *know* that we have eternal life because we keep His commandments.

In chapter 3 we *know* that we have eternal life because we love the brethren.

In chapter 5 we *know* that we have eternal life because we believe His Word.

In chapter 5:20 we *know* we have eternal life because we are in Him that is true.

My friend, if we do not enjoy the life we have in Christ, it is because of our unbelief, because we still have doubts about the accomplishment of Christ on the cross.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He finished a complete work. He was buried, but He was raised again from the dead, and He will never again be put on the cross. He will never again be a sacrifice for sin.

Proof Texts

- **For Christ also died for sins ONCE FOR ALL, the just for the unjust (I Peter 3:18).**
- **We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL (Hebrews 10:10).**
- **But He, having offered ONE sacrifice for sins FOR ALL TIME, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).**
- **By ONE offering He has perfected FOR ALL TIME those who are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14).**

Christ will never die again. After a person has accepted the Saviour and received the atonement and been made a child of God and given eternal life, then if there is a possibility of being lost, such a person must be lost forever.

There can be no more sacrifice for sin.

Christ cannot be put back on the cross again.

Christ has accomplished a perfect, complete work.

We may fall because of our frailty.

We may get out of the will of God by doing things we should not do or saying things we should not say.

But this does not destroy eternal life.

It does affect our fellowship with God. It will have an affect on our service when we fail God.

Our failures never affect our relationship or our possession of life in Christ Jesus.

After all, we do not keep ourselves in our relationship to Christ. Jesus prayed,

- **“Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou has given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.**
- **“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name.**
- **“. . . I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one” (John 17:11,12,15).**

You are protected by the power of God! (I Pet. 1:5).

God has made Himself responsible for the protecting of every one of His true children.

CERTAINTY IN PRAYER

The absolute assurance of life will lead the Christian to assurance in prayer. Prayer is pouring out our heart to God. This can be done with confidence and boldness in Christ, coming into the very presence of God with our requests and knowing that God hears us.

5:14. And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us:

5:15. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

We can come to the throne of God with boldness because *we are confident about the future*. Scripture assures us of this.

Proof Texts

- **Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).**
- **Abide in Him; so that, when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 John 2:28).**
- **By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17).**

We can have boldness before God also *in view of our present experience*.

- **If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God (1 John 3:21).**
- **This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14).**

This boldness is a present experience in coming to the throne of God and there obtaining mercy.

The consciousness of divine life brings the believer into a place of boldness. The more we realize our relationship to the living God, the more we realize that we are the children of One who is God, the more we see that His life has become our life, the deeper will be our appreciation of the fact that God's heart is wrapped up in us who are believers.

It is when we see the great yearning of His heart for our fellowship that we have boldness to come to God just like a child comes with confidence to

father or mother. A child will not have that same confidence with strangers. Yet he will bring to the attention of the parents every small, insignificant, childish thing that comes into his life. A parent's loving heart listens and enters into his child's problems and cares and undertakes for him.

So it is with our heavenly Father. God has made us the objects of His love and His grace. The consciousness of this relationship to the Son of God and the realization that we are partakers of divine life in Christ Jesus give us this boldness in His presence.

God gives to us this wonderful privilege of prayer. So much has been written and spoken about prayer, and yet we know so little about it.

How much does it enter into our practical experience?

How often do we come to God with our requests on the ground of our relationship to Him?

Do we understand the conditions attached to it?

It may be well to go over them briefly once more.

John 14:13,14 informs us that we should ask in the name of Jesus and that the purpose of our requests should be that the Father may be glorified in the Son. This rules out selfish requests for selfish motives. In John 15:7 Jesus declares union with Him to be a condition connected with prayer:

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”

When the Word of God is abiding in the believer, then that person is abiding in Christ. To abide is to live a life of obedience. The person who abides in the Word will get the mind of God, and then it will follow that those things will be requested in prayer which will bring glory to Him.

In John 16:23-27, Jesus tells his disciples He will no longer make requests for them but that they are to go directly to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. The ground for the answer to prayer is not our love for the Father but it is His love for us. Jesus Himself made His request in

John 17:24 on the basis of the Father's love for Him:

“. . . for thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.”

Jesus tells us in John 16 that on the ground of the Father's love for us, He will grant the request. Sometimes He will answer a request with a “No” because He knows what is the very best for us.

Finally, according to this verse in 1 John 5:14,15, prayer, to be answered, must be according to His will.

What is His will?

How can we know His will?

How can we know whether we are praying in His will or in self will?

The will of God is revealed to us in the Word of God. His purposes and plans and program are all in the Book.

I have noticed in my years of ministry that the first step in backsliding is neglect of the Word of God.

How can you be obedient to the Word of God unless you read it?

How can you know the will of God unless you abide in the Word of God?

People come to me telling that the Lord showed them this or that. Ah, the question is, did this arise out of imagination and self-will or did it come from the word of God?

It is certainly true that the Spirit of God takes the truths of the Word of God and makes them very real to us. He puts them into our hearts and reveals the will of God to us. Then, when we pray according to His will, He hears us.

This consciousness and realization of relationship to God and partnership with Him in His divine life bring the believer into a place of boldness in prayer. This is not to be brief only, but it is to be a daily experience! There is nothing too great for God to do for man, and there is nothing too small for God to grant to His people.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

He numbers our steps (Job. 14:16). The very hairs of our head are all numbered (Matthew 10:30). He bottles our tears (Psa. 56:8).

Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will not fall to the ground apart from your Father. . . . Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29,31).

The Lord is desirous of doing more for us than we can ever ask or think. The problem is that self-will and sin enter in, and we try to come before God with unconfessed sin in our lives. Hence, we are not clean before God.

He has revealed to us how to be cleansed in 1 John 1:9. If we confess our sin, He forgives us and cleanses us. Then we are to go on with God and walk in fellowship with Him. We will be taught to know His will, to know the things that please God, and our prayers will be in His will.

Sometimes God's people are actually amazed that God should answer their prayers because they really didn't expect them to be answered. An example of this is in Acts 12. The disciples were praying for the deliverance of Peter, and the Lord wonderfully answered their prayer. When Peter knocked on the door, they wouldn't believe that it was really Peter.

Isn't it true that sometimes we pray so casually that ten minutes later we have forgotten what we prayed for? Yet the astounding fact is that God answers and meets our need. There is nothing that God will withhold from the one who prays, believing.

In Matthew 17 the disciples tried unsuccessfully to cast out a demon, and then they asked the Lord why they could not do it.

Jesus answered,

Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:20-21).

In other words, He is offering to them a touch of omnipotence! He has given to His disciples a tool which is so powerful that there is not a force on the earth to equal it. Study the Bible and you will find examples in Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers where whole nations have been delivered from extinction by the prayers of one man.

The sad fact is that we Christians possess the most powerful weapon in the universe, but we do not use it as we should. We preach about it and teach about it, but we do not use it. When we try to use it, we fail to use it properly. We fail to study the Scriptures to learn precisely what it does say about prayer. Then, because we do not get what we want, we doubt that God answers prayer.

The Word of God *commands* us to pray.

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men; for kings, and all who are in authority; in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (I Timothy 2:1,2).

God has given into the hands of the Christians a tool whereby we may have peace, assurance, quietness in our land. Yet we live in a world and in a nation that is chaotic today.

Why don't we use our weapon?

Why don't we?

I believe that if the Christians in this country were to get down on their knees before God in the blessed ministry of prayer and intercession, there is nothing that God would hold back from us and from our nation.

There is one problem. Do we really mean business with God?

Our Lord gave us a parable about that very thing.

A man went to his friend in the middle of the night and wanted to borrow three loaves of bread, but the friend answered him, "I am in bed; my wife is in bed; my children are in bed; so I am not going to get up to give you three loaves of bread."

The man replied, "Brother, the sooner you give me the three loaves, the sooner you can go back to bed." So he just kept on knocking and knocking. "I want my three loaves of bread."

The Lord says that the friend will get up and give him as many loaves as he wants because of his "persistence"—because he really means business (Luke 11:5-10).

Sometimes I wonder, do we really mean business with God when we pray? Or are we just saying words?

This boldness before God in prayer will also express itself in intercession. In fact, the more one spends time in the presence of God, the more one prays for others. We come now to two difficult verses about prayer for others.

5:16. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

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

He is definitely talking about God's people here because he says, "If any man see his brother sin." I believe this reveals God in His governmental dealing with His people, His own family. Let us look more into the detail of these verses which have been a problem to so many of God's people.

This is not talking about the unpardonable sin as found in Matthew 12. That sin is ascribing to Satan those things which are done by the Spirit of God. Our Lord performed miracles under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit; but the people of His day, especially the leaders, said that

He did His miracles according to Beelzebub, the prince of the demons.

This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons (Matthew 12:24).

To put it in very blunt language, they were saying that Jesus Christ came from hell. They said this after the Lord had already presented His credentials as the Messiah and after His gracious words had proceeded from His mouth. The Lord Jesus said that this sin was unpardonable.

Nor are these verses talking about the willful sin of Hebrews 10. The willful sin is the despising of the Person of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the Work of Christ.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29).

This is actually the end of the argument of the Book of Hebrews. If Christ is spurned as the Saviour, then there is nothing left but judgment. This is the willful sin.

These verses in 1 John are talking about the fact that there are limitations in praying for others. There is a sin unto death and this sin may be committed by a believer. This sin might be a continuous wrong attitude before God. We are not to pray for it or even to make inquiry concerning it.

There is no question in my mind that God, in His governmental dealing with His people, sometimes permits physical death as a judgment upon

a person so that his soul might be saved at the coming of the Lord.

First Corinthians tells of a young man who had committed adultery. Even before the man showed any repentance, the church was actually glorying in their liberty. Paul wrote that when they would come together, with his spirit and with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, they should "*deliver such n one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*" (I Corinthians 5:5).

In chapter five of Acts, Ananias and Sapphira came under the judgment of God and died physically. I believe this is what John refers to in this Epistle. The sin unto death is a sin which brings physical death as the judgment of God upon one of His children.

Scripture states three reasons for the physical death of a Christian:

1. A Christian may die because his work is finished. Paul could say,

The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:6,7).

Peter wrote, **Knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me (2 Pet. 1:14).**

Their work was finished.

2. A Christian may die for the glory of God. Jesus told Peter that he would be martyred and that by his death he should glorify God (John 21:18,19). Numerous martyrs have died for the glory of God.

3. A Christian may die under the chastening hand of God. Paul had a recommendation for dealing with the man in the Corinthian congregation, the man who was living in adultery. He was to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of

the flesh so that his spirit might be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5). When Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their unbelief in regard to the Lord's Supper, he says,

For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (I Corinthians 11:30).

In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira were chastened with physical death because of their lie. These verses in 1 John 5 are referring to Christians and speak of a "*sin unto death.*"

I firmly believe it is possible for a Christian to die prematurely under the chastening hand of God. This does not indicate that such a Christian is lost eternally, but it does mean that such a person is robbed of the opportunity of staying on earth as a testimony for the glory of God.

None of us wants to leave this world before his work is completed. Yet, Scripture teaches that some Christians die under the chastening hand of God.

This is a fitting time for a word of warning. Let us each evaluate his own life and not judge each other. It is not your prerogative, nor mine, to conclude that a certain individual has died or is dying under the judgment of God. Let us leave that judgment completely in the hands of God.

The Lord has never told us that we should be the judge or the jury!

However, it is well for us to ponder this matter of God's governmental dealing with His own people. This thought should encourage us to be walking continually with our actions, our words, and our whole life in its very attitude, all for the glory of God.

We see in verse 16 that there is a sin unto death and there is a sin which is not unto death. Everything that is not righteous is sin.

All lawlessness and every transgression of the law is sin.

We Christians ought to be very, very conscious of our relationship with each other. The very fact that a fellow Christian is sinning should

stimulate us to intercessory prayer. We are to be bold in prayer for one another. Yet we are told there is a sin unto death, and God alone is the judge of this.

This sobering fact should cause us to take our place before God, humbly walk with Him, and let Him work out His perfect will in us.

CERTAINTY OF VICTORY

5:18. We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

5:19. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

5:20. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

There are three divine certainties of victory:

1. The assurance of holiness in verse 18.
2. The assurance of life in verse 19.
3. the assurance of redemption in verse 20.

1. The Assurance of Holiness

5:18. We know that no one who is born of God sins.

We shall not go into a full discussion of chapter 3:6-8 again. However, we must face sin realistically. Whatever is unrighteous is sin, and a Christian is in a body that is not yet glorified. Christians do sin. There would be no need for 1 John 1:9 if this were not so.

However, that which is born of God cannot sin. The new man in Christ is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). A man in Christ is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When we accepted the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we were made new creatures in Christ and

received the Spirit of God to indwell us. That new man cannot sin because it is born of God. God is righteous, and that which is born of God cannot sin, nor can the wicked one touch that which is begotten of God.

The Christian, then, is a person who is still in the body with its frailty and its desires but who has also become a new person, begotten of God and indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Romans 6:11 says the Christian is to live his life reckoning himself to be dead to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Therefore, the Christian life should no longer be characterized or dominated by sin.

If your life is dominated by sin and you profess to be a Christian, then examine yourself to see whether you are really in the faith. There are a great many people who profess they believe in the Saviour, but who have never had any relationship with Christ.

They may belong to a church and assent to all the historical facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and yet not have a real experience of accepting the Saviour.

If you have had a personal relationship with the Saviour, your life will not be characterized and dominated by sin. There will be in you that which is born of God, and the Spirit of God will keep you from the evil one because "*that wicked one toucheth him not.*"

God has given us this assurance of holiness in our lives. God has made the provision for restoration so that if our fellowship with the Lord is broken by sin, we are forgiven and cleansed as soon as we confess that sin.

2. The Assurance of Life

19. We know that we are of God.

Knowing we are of God gives us assurance of life. There are many other Scriptures which give us this same assurance.

Proof Texts

- **We are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pet. 1:5).**
- **I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (2 Timothy 1:12).**
- **For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).**
- **Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Saviour . . . (Jude 24-25).**
- **And may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (I Thessalonians 5:23,24).**
- **Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me (John 17:11).**
- **Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2).**

We are of God. The whole world lieth in the lap of the wicked one. There is a clear-cut distinction stated here. The world is in the opposite camp. This was the theme of Peter's sermon in Acts 2 when he said, "You crucified Him but God raised Him; you cast Him out but God took him in. You are in the wrong camp!"

This life-giving relationship is an individual, personal matter. Can you say that you are a child of God, that you are of God? Do you have a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ? If you do not, you can come into such a relationship right now by accepting Jesus Christ as your own, personal Saviour.

3. The Assurance of Redemption

Verse 20 assures us of our redemption because "*we are in him.*" We know that the Son of God has

come, and we have an understanding of the reason for His coming.

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all (I Timothy 1:15).

“We may know him that is true” both by faith and by our experience. We know that He is the true Saviour, the only Saviour, the Saviour who guarantees salvation by His own resurrection from the dead. It also states that *“we are in him that is true.”* We are in union with Him by faith.

“THIS is the true God, and eternal life.” This! This Jesus Christ!!

- **I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved (John 10:9).**
- **I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).**
- **I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever (John 6:51).**
- **“Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, even as thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent (John 17:1-3).**

THE CONCLUSION

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

The conclusion is an appeal. It is an appeal to God's people to keep themselves from idols. An idol is anything that comes between us and our heart affection for the Saviour. Covetousness is idolatry (Eph. 5:5).

He has just said in verse 20 that we know the Son of God is true, that we are in the Son of God who is true, and that this Son of God is the true God and eternal life.

Now comes the solemn warning about idols.

Is there anything or anybody that takes the place of Christ in your heart?

In your devotion?

Do you have any ambitions which displace Him in your heart?

The very first verse in the Bible says, "*In the beginning God.*" If Dr. Westcott, the eminent Bible scholar, is correct, then the last verse of the Bible to be written is: "*Keep yourselves from idols.*"

The whole Bible between the first verse and this last verse reveals in type, in shadow, in experience, in reality that the heart of God is displayed to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. *He is the true God and eternal life.*

He is the *way* to the Father (John 14:6).

He is the *truth* that sets us free (John 8:31-32 and John 14:6).

He is the *life* that brings us into relationship with the living God (John 14:6).

REVIEW OF THE EPISTLE

The Bible was written for us to know the purpose of God and His desire and His love for us. Not only does it reveal that He redeems sinners and makes them His children, but also that He greatly longs for their fellowship.

So let us review this Epistle in an attempt to catch the movement of the Spirit of God in giving it to us.

In the Gospel of John we are taught how to receive life by faith in Christ. In the Epistle of John we are taught how to enjoy that life.

In the Gospel of John we learn that we receive eternal life by faith. In the Epistle of John we know that we have eternal life because we experience it.

The entire Epistle of John deals with our fellowship with God. There is given to us a three-fold revelation of God in this Epistle:

We have fellowship with God who is light, that is, who is holy.

We have fellowship with God who is righteous.

We have fellowship with God who is love.

1 John 1:1-4 is the introduction. This states the experience of John and the other apostles and gives their testimony. The subject is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. The purpose of the coming of our Lord was to redeem a people for His name and to make these redeemed ones fit for fellowship with God.

The apostles told what they had seen, heard, and experienced so that we might have fellowship with the Father and with the Son and that through such fellowship our joy might be filled full.

1 John 1:5-2:28 discusses fellowship with God who is light. The *test* of such fellowship is walking in the light (1:5-8). The *provision* for the fellowship is the confession of our sins (1:9-10). The *ground* for the fellowship is the complete work of Christ at the cross and His advocacy on the basis of His abiding propitiation for our sin (2:1,2).

The *evidence* of such fellowship is obedience to His Word, submission to His will, and love for the brethren (2:3-11). This provides a way in which we can test whether or not we are in fellowship with God. It is also the way others may know whether or not we are in fellowship with God.

The *place* of the fellowship is in the family of God (2:12-28). There is no admonition to the fathers in the family because they are mature Christians. The young men in the family have had victory over the devil, but now they have a new enemy, the world. The babes in Christ are exhorted against false teachers, those who deny the Incarnate Word of God. This division of the Epistle closes with an appeal to all the family to abide in Him.

1 John 2:29-4:6 discusses fellowship with God who is righteous. The fact that God is righteous is stated in 3:7. This naturally raises the question, "How can I have fellowship with God who is righteous when I do so many unrighteous things?"

We are *encouraged* in fellowship with a righteous God because of our relationship to Him (3:1-3). We do not belong to this world, but we are His beloved children even though we are in frailty. Our *present experience* is relationship. We are the children of God. Our *future experience* will be that we shall be like Him when He comes. Everyone who has this hope will purify himself even as He is pure. This is our *present experience* of purification on the basis of our hope.

The opposition to the fellowship comes from satanic forces. The children of God are contrasted with the children of the devil (3:4-13). Righteousness characterizes the people of God, whereas

wickedness and sinfulness are manifest in those who do not belong to God.

The unsaved man lives a life which is characterized by sin. The child of God lives a life in his thoughts, words, and deeds which is not dominated nor characterized by sin.

The *evidence* of such fellowship with God is love for the brethren, confidence in prayer, and obedience to His Word (3:14-24). We have that wonderful confidence before God when our hearts do not condemn us and there is nothing between us and the Lord.

Then we come knowing that He hears us and will meet our need and answer our prayer to glorify Himself in us. He explains that His commandments for us are that we should believe on the name of the Son of God and that we should love one another as He gave us command. We know that we belong to Him by the indwelling Spirit which He has given to us.

The Spirit of Christ and the spirit of antichrist are contrasted (4:1-6). We are to try the spirits. Anyone who denies the Incarnate Word of God, who denies that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, is not of God.

1 John 4:7-5:5 discusses fellowship with God who is love. The *revelation* that God is love is given in verses 7-10. This love was demonstrated to us and for us at the cross. Our fellowship with this God who is love is manifested by our love to others, especially to those who are the people of God. As we walk with Him, fear is gone because perfect love casts out fear.

After we are told to love the brethren, the natural question is, "Who are my brethren?" This is answered in the first five verses of chapter 5. My brother is anyone who confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The Epistle continues by encouraging us. We have victory over the world, and this victory is guaranteed to us because of our union with the Son of God Himself. Then we are given the certainty of God's testimony concerning all the things that He has done for us. We have the certainty of

life eternal because we are in the Son of God (5:9-13).

Not to believe that we have eternal life in the Son of God is to make God a liar. God has born testimony to the fact that everyone who puts his trust in Jesus *has* eternal life. This certainty of eternal life gives to us a confidence in prayer (5:14-17).

The Epistle concludes with the certainty of victory.

We may have confidence in the presence of God.

We may have confidence in a life that is not characterized by sin.

We may have confidence in a life that is not under the authority of Satan.

We know that we belong to God. We know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, that is, Jesus Christ. We want Him to be the very center of our lives.

Then there is the final plea.

21. Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Make Christ the very center of your life!

May the Lord bless you as you read and reread this wonderful Epistle of John. The Lord bless you for His name's sake.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

During John's lifetime there were certain false teachers who had come into the church of Christ, and they were declaring that Jesus Christ was a mere man. They were not standing for the truth and were denying that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh.

The Gnostic heresy declared that since all matter and all flesh are evil and God is holy, therefore a holy God cannot dwell with that which is evil. Hence they said that Jesus Christ cannot be God but is a created being, possibly an emanation from God—higher than the angels, but still a created being.

John refutes this heresy in his Epistles.

May I say that if Jesus Christ is not who He claimed to be, God manifest in the flesh, the El Shaddai whom Abraham worshiped, then all the truth of the gospel is void. Then His work on the cross is of no redeeming value, and there is no resurrection from the dead. When Jesus Christ is not worshiped as God or when He ceases to be the center of our worship, then we no longer have a Christian fellowship.

In the First Epistle, John speaks of the *nature* and the *place* of the fellowship and how we know that we are saved in Christ Jesus. In the Second Epistle, he deals with the *limit* of the fellowship, that is, whom to *exclude* from the fellowship of God's people.

In the Third Epistle, John talks about the *extent* of the fellowship, that is, whom to *include* in the fellowship.

In the Second epistle, he condemns heresy because of departure from the truth and from the love of the truth.

In the Third Epistle, the apostle condemns divisions and schisms among God's people.

The key to the Second Epistle of John is *Walking in the Truth*.

THE SALUTATION

1:1. The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,

1:2. for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

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

1:4. I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Colossians 2:3 tells us that, in Christ Jesus, God has hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We are not searching for the truth. *Jesus Christ is the truth.* We may not understand all about it. We may not have experienced much of it. This does not alter the fact that Jesus Christ is the truth.

This is the very foundation of Christianity.

Notice that the apostle mentions the truth in each of the first four verses: "Whom I love in truth," "all who know the truth," "for the sake of the truth," "in truth and love," "walking in truth."

Walking in the truth is the activity of one who loves the truth. In other words, what we believe will be manifest in how we live. If we believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and if we love Him, this will affect our entire life. It will especially affect our attitude to those who are related to Him, those who are fellow members in the family of God. We will love the people of God because we love the truth. Christ is the truth.

I cannot repeat it too often. The great foundation for fellowship is the person of Christ. When Christ ceases to be the center of fellowship, then divisions and heresies come in.

Those who do not love the truth, who are not related to the Saviour, will enter the fellowship and cause trouble. The end result will be a worldly church.

Such a church will include those who detract from the person of Christ.

Such people become the instruments of Satan for the destruction of the fellowship.

We are dealing with very practical matters. Where there is no love for the truth, there will be little love for God's people.

John here is appealing for a genuine love for the Saviour, a genuine love for the truth, a genuine love for the Word of God.

This was the very heart of the doctrine of the early church. It is also the very heart of fellowship. If only we would follow this truth today! Then the Lord Jesus Christ would be the center of our worship, and we would include all those who believe the truth.

EXHORTATION TO LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

1:5. And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

1:6. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

We are admonished to love one another in the truth. This theme runs through all the Epistles of John.

God sees our faith, but men experience our love. The manifestation of our love is obedience to His commandments.

Jesus said the same thing.

- **He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me (John 14:21)**

- **If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word (John 14:23).**

The whole New Testament declares that the manifestation before the world that we love the Saviour is our obedience to His Word. Love is the motive for that obedience.

- **But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do (John 14:31).**

WARNING AGAINST ERROR

1:7. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

1:8. Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

1:9. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

1:10. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;

1:11. for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

John here speaks very emphatically concerning those who deny that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. He calls them deceivers and declares that they are to be excluded from our fellowship. The danger is that we may become lax in our relationships and permit those who deny the Incarnate Word of God to enter into our fellowship. If we do this, we are in danger of losing our reward. So there is a necessity to be separated from such deceivers.

Does John mean that if someone who denies the Incarnate Word of God comes into the church, he should not be received?

That is exactly what he is saying.

We who believe in Him cannot have fellowship with one who denies the Son of God, denies His Word, His work on the cross, His resurrection.

John says clearly that if we receive him or bid him God speed, we are partakers of his evil deeds. There must be separation of believers from those who deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PERSONAL REMARKS

1:12. Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

1:13. The children of your chosen sister greet you.

There is great joy in fellowship with those who love the Saviour.

This enjoyment of fellowship is something that is outside the understanding and experience of the man of the world. There is a very special bond between those who really know and love the One who came into the world and gave Himself for us.

I have traveled in many parts of the world and have been in homes in many countries. Always there is a feeling of oneness with those who know my Lord. There is a fullness of joy in speaking face to face with fellow believers.

Several times in his Gospel and also in his Epistles, John speaks of fullness of joy. This is one of them.

1:12b. I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

- **Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name (Mal. 3:16).**

I trust that you and I may know this joy.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

This Epistle gives the *extent of the fellowship by telling whom to include in the fellowship.* It condemns divisions and schisms by those who have departed from the love of the truth.

The theme of 21 John is: *Love in the Truth.* This Epistle is talking about loving those who are in the truth. It recommends that all those who are brethren should stand for the truth.

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

- 1:1. The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.
- 1:2. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.
- 1:3. For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.
- 1:4. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in truth.

1. His Desire for Gaius (vv. 1 and 2)

You will notice that John has a warm heart, filled with the Spirit of God, in his great desire for God's people to know something of fellowshiping together in the truth.

People from all over the world have so many different philosophies that some may wonder who is telling the truth. How wonderful to know that Jesus Christ is the embodiment not only of love but also of truth!

John, being in love with the Saviour, is in love with God's people.

I take it from this verse that Gaius was reveling in the truth of God but that he had a frail body. John wishes that he might prosper and be in health in body just as his soul prospers.

I am afraid that today it is often just the other way around. We are very much exercised about how our bodies prosper; we become health faddists, food faddists, sun worshipers, concerned that our bodies be beautiful and healthy.

How much are we concerned about our health in our relation to Christ? We become very concerned when we do not feel too well. Are we as much concerned when our hearts grow cold towards Christ?

Do you realize that the great majority of professing Christians never grow, never mature?

They may be professing Christians for years and yet know little about the Saviour in practical life. They know so little about the reality of life in Christ, about the purpose of God and His will and His desire. They do not know God's program. Where can God's program be found? In the Bible.

Oh, how I like what John says here: "Gaius, I'd like for you to prosper in your body just as you are prospering in your soul."

2. *The character of Gaius (verse 3)*

The life of Gaius was characterized by walking in the truth. John rejoices in this, and other brethren bore testimony to the fact that Gaius walked in the truth. Not only did he believe the truth, but he lived the truth; and the truth lived in him. He was in love with the Saviour, and his whole life was a manifestation of the fact that he was living in fellowship with the Lord. Walking in the truth is one of the great evidences of a heart in fellowship with God.

This man walked in the truth, and he had a real testimony for God. The brethren testified to that. You see, loving the truth makes one spiritually healthy, and service will be the natural outflow of a walk with God.

When we try to put it the other way around, putting service before our walk with God, we soon

get tired of service and our work becomes legalistic. It no longer brings joy to the heart, but it becomes a burden.

Unfortunately, there are a great many people who endure religion instead of enjoying Christ. I hope you may know something of the joy and blessing and wonder of knowing the Saviour. May you be strong in spirit as this man Gaius was.

3. *John's Rejoicing* (verse 4)

It is a real joy for a pastor or a Bible teacher or a Sunday School teacher, or a friend, or a parent, to lead someone to Christ and to see him hungry for the Word of God. It is a thrill to go to a Bible conference and see hundreds of people who are using their vacation time to attend Bible studies, morning, afternoon, and evening.

The world knows—nothing—about this wonderful hunger for the Word of God.

It rejoices my heart, too, to see people walking in the truth. I love to see young people carry their Bibles and read them whenever they have a chance. How I rejoice whenever I see real love for the Saviour!

WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH

1:5. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers;

1:6. and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

1:7. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

1:8. Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Love for the people of God will be manifested in Christian courtesy and Christian hospitality and in encouraging other believers to bear testimony.

Apparently there were those brethren who traveled from place to place, preaching the Word of God. Gaius took them in, cared for them, manifesting his love for God's people because of his love for the Saviour.

These brethren would take nothing from the Gentile world but were trusting the Lord to meet their needs.

John says that such ones should be received into the fellowship so that we may be fellow-helpers to the truth. We are to take in and care for those who have sacrificed for the sake of the Gospel.

We are to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. We become co-workers with them. We are workers together with God (2 Corinthians 6:1 and 1 Corinthians 3:9). We are workers together with each other.

My friend, God will never be in your debt. We are all on God's team. Each person is gifted to do a particular job, and some are told to go, some are told to stay. But we are all fellow-helpers to the truth; and, when God rewards His people, we will all share in the reward.

Some of us give all our time and strength to the study and the preaching of the Word.

Others pray for us and help support us, but they also are to be giving this message of the truth to their friends.

One of the greatest of all needs today is for God's people to pray for His servants everywhere as they minister the Word of God and also to pray for each other.

We are all workers together, fellow-helpers to the truth.

THE WARNING

1:9. I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.

1:10. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not

satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.

1:11. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

In contrast to Gaius, this man Diotrephes, possibly a member of the same church, wanted the place of prominence.

Even when someone who really loved the Lord came to the assembly and the brethren wanted to receive him, this man would forbid them to receive him. He wanted to dominate everything so he would cast others out.

Unfortunately, there are such men in churches today. They want to run everything and rule over everything. Such do not have time to manifest love or compassion for the babes in Christ. They are primarily concerned with their own position.

The people of God in an assembly are knitted together for a purpose. That purpose is worship, thanksgiving and praise to God, and then the feeding and encouragement of God's people.

We are to manifest Christian grace and love and hospitality to each other. Especially are we to encourage those babes in Christ so they will be fed the Word of God and not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We should thank the Lord when He has sent a leader to us.

The Lord has a place for every one of us. There are no two of us alike, and we each have our gift. We are all a part of the body of Christ and members in particular, having a particular job; and each of us is to manifest love (1 Corinthians 12:12-13:1).

When a stranger who really loves the Lord comes to our assembly, we need to recognize and manifest the fact that we have the same Saviour, the same hope, the same love in Christ Jesus. If there is a need, we should meet that need.

I fear we have chased many dear people of God away from our churches because some of God's people want the place of prominence.

He warns us in verse 11 not to follow that which is evil, but to follow that which is good.

CONCLUSION AND PERSONAL GREETINGS

1:12. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true.

1:13. I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink;

1:14. but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

We now meet the third man in the Epistle, Demetrius, who has a good report and walks in the truth. In the assembly there is Gaius, who is weak in body but receives the brethren in the Lord.

There is also Diotrephes, who "wants to be the big chief," and he is opposed to every one who does not agree with him.

Now John is saying that a stranger is coming to them and that John's record of him is good. He has a good report and knows the truth and walks in the truth. John's letter is written so that they will receive Demetrius.

The second Epistle was to instruct them *not to receive those who deny the Incarnate Word of God.*

The third Epistle was to instruct them *to receive* those who have a good record and love the truth and walk in the truth.

The personal salutations are similar to the previous Epistle:

"I would love to see you face to face. I would love to talk with you about the things of the Lord. I am coming soon. I hope, and I am looking forward to our fellowship in the Saviour. Give my friends my love."

We can just see the friendliness of this man John to the people of God. No wonder he is called the Apostle of Love!

Our Saviour is love personified. The Saviour so filled the heart of John with His divine love that John expressed it continually.

God grant that we will be numbered among those who walk in the truth and who love the brethren.

May the Lord bless you for His name's sake!

Should you wish to inform Prof. Dick Bohrer, the editor, and the Mitchell family of your response to this volume, write them at:

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