

Studies in I John

By Faith Evans

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INTRODUCTION

This epistle was written around A. D. 90 from Ephesus, when John was a very old man. With the exception of the Song of Solomon, it is the most intimate of the inspired Word of God. It is called a "letter", but it neither begins nor ends as such. What reasons or situations moved John to 'Write this first epistle?

(1) As this was two or three generations after Jesus had been taken to glory, Acts Chapter One, a falling away had begun. Jesus knew this would happen (Matthew 24:12). Paul knew, who had gone on to glory (2 Timothy 3). Also it was to this very church at Ephesus that John wrote Jesus' words in Revelation 2:4 - Thou hast left thy first love. Some of the saints did not want to be "different" or "holy ones," as the word "saint" means in the Greek. This was also Israel's downfall, as God had called her to be an holy nation (I Peter 2:9; Deuteronomy 7:6-9). This same John wrote in his Gospel, in 15:19 - Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. Also in John 17:14 - Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

We do not read of outward persecution, as Christians had earlier; but of a threatening of seduction from within the Church. We have Jesus' words in Matthew 24:11, and Paul's words in Acts 20:29-30. So who were these false teachers? John says, in I John 2:19 - They went out from us, but they were not of us; and in 4:1 - many false prophets are gone out into the world; and in 2:26 - These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. They denied that Jesus was the Messiah in I John 2:22; and Satan used this to discourage. Instead of Jesus returning in their day, God had allowed Jerusalem to be captured by the Romans in A. D. 70; and, the holy city was literally torn stone from stone and a plough was drawn across the midst of it, leaving it desolate.

Those who were false teachers were called Gnostics which means "to know," who denied the reality of the incarnation and Jesus' physical body. They assigned to Jesus merely the highest rank in the order of spirits, while exalting angels (Colossians 2:18). John refutes them in 4:2, 3.

There were two groups of these Gnostics: (1) Docetists which means "to seem," and they taught that Jesus only seemed to have a body; that His body was a phantom, and He never had flesh and blood. (2) Then there were the Corinthian Gnostics, who said that Jesus was a man born in a natural way, not virgin born. But that, at His baptism, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended on Him; and that, at the end of His life at the Cross, Christ again withdrew. In I John 5:6, John rebukes them saying, This is he that came by water and blood. He suffered and finished His work. Only by His becoming Man could He save man, for salvation is dependent on full identification of Jesus Christ with man.

These Gnostics believed that they were completely above sin. John refers to this in 1:8-10. They claimed a superior private knowledge over and above that of the Bible. In claiming this, their attitude was of contempt and hatred toward others whom they felt were inferior; and it brought a destruction in the fellowship of God's people. They were going "to cleanse" the Church of "dead wood," they said. This is why John writes over and over again regarding love for the brethren.

As we proceed in our study, we will see how John defends the saints he loves from these seducing and threatening attacks, as he unfolds the truth that:

1. Jesus is the Son of God. He is eternal. 4:15; 5:5
2. Jesus was from the beginning. 1:1; 2:14
3. Jesus was truly and fully Man. 1:1-3, To deny this is the spirit of anti-Christ. 4:2, 3
4. Jesus was without sin. 3:5, Man in his arrogance claims to be without sin. 1:8-10
5. Jesus is our Advocate. 2:1
6. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. 2:2; 4:10, A sacrifice which restores broken or interrupted fellowship.
7. Jesus Christ gives life. 4:9; 5:11, 12
8. Jesus is the Savior of the world. 4:14

We have given this above information as an introduction, so that we may more fully understand the words of John and the reasons he writes as he does. He had a great love for Jesus which he desires all of us to have. We are indebted to other men of God for many of our findings in our study of these epistles.

The Word of God is life and light
Its precepts all are pure and right:

Forever settled up in Heav'n
A Word of Truth, to mortals given,
How wonderful is all thy Word
The greatest message ever heard
Its message never more grows old
'Tis precious, better far than gold

CHAPTER ONE

John's Authority and His Object in Writing

First. John begins by saying, That which was from the beginning (1:1). That is, things concerning our Lord, rather than Him personally. He was before the foundation of the world, and at the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8). His right to speak is based upon his personal experience with Jesus Christ. First he says, we have heard, in a human voice. From the perfect tense, his hearing was not confined to one single occasion; but he heard at repeated intervals and at length. He heard Him speak completely and so often, that there was no question left in his mind as to His humanity. His hearing Him speak brought results. When John writes this letter sixty years later, the Holy Spirit was causing Jesus' words to ring in his ears. How blessed and precious for His Word to ring in our ears also, even though we heard some in our childhood or later on in our lives. Let us let it ring!

Second. John says, we have seen with our eyes. Jesus' body was not an optical illusion, but an actual human body. In spirit, sixty years later, he could see Him as He appeared to him during His humiliation.

Third. He says, We have looked upon. Looked in the Greek is "theaomai," and means "to behold, view attentively, contemplate." The word "theater" comes to us from this Greek word. Further, it means to gaze at something or someone as a spectacle, until that look has grasped something of the meaning and significance of that person or thing. The word see in Luke 7:24 is the same, and the word beheld in John 1:14.

Fourth. John says, our hands have handled. Note that "four" is the number of man. He had touched or felt Him. He had leaned on His breast. John knew He was more than a phantom, for he had drawn strength and love from Him. But these Docetists groups thought that God would "soil Himself" by taking upon Him human flesh and blood.

John handled "the Word of this Life." Life is the nature of the Word. In him was life; and the life was light of men (John 1:4). He says this life was manifested (I John 1:2). That is, as the human capacity and understanding could spiritually comprehend, the Life was unfolded before them and to them. God was manifested in Christ (I Timothy 3:16); and, as we see the "many folds" in Christ, we understand God and His ways. That which was hidden or unknown was now made visible or known (Ephesians 3:5). John says, We have seen, have experienced; bear witness, have testified; and show unto you, announce that eternal life. A life that was not measured by time, which was Divine and of a character that He could have fellowship with God. He was "with" or facing God, and communed with His Father before He came to earth.

That Life was now manifested unto us for a reason or purpose. That purpose is that men might accept that Divine Life, be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). That they may have fellowship with us - with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1:3). John and others then possessed this fellowship. He said, our fellowship. This fellowship distinguished them from the world. It was not a mere fact with them, but a strong enjoyment and realization. They learned to love what He loved, and hate what He hated.

By writing to us John says that all who see Him and hear Him and touch Him, through the inspired Word that he wrote, will have "Your joy" completely fulfilled, verse 4. This is the joy that comes through the Holy Spirit unfolding the manifold riches of Christ to us. It becomes joy unspeakable and full of glory (I Peter 1:8).

So John had a message that he and others had heard of Jesus, and that was that God is light in His very nature: whether it is in His glory which is physical, in His Truth which is intellectual, or in His holiness which is moral. Jesus had become the Light of his life and the delight of his eyes.

This light was first manifested in creation (Genesis 1:3). Abraham saw it in the "burning lamp" in Genesis 15:17. Israel saw it in the pillar of fire as well as in the Most Holy Place -- the Shekinah glory that rested on the mercy seat. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6 -- For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Oh, we praise the Lord for this knowledge and truth and glory that have enabled us to have communion with God our Father.

The word if in verse six is an assumed case. Some in John's day taught that a person could live in sin and

compromise with it and at the same time have fellowship with God. Notice he says we, including himself, dealing gently and humbly with his readers. The term walk in darkness speaks of habitual action, outward and inward. In verse seven, the term walk in the light also indicates a habitual course of life, outward and inward. James 1:17 calls God the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. So, as we walk in the light, we advance by means of the light to more light. Proverbs 4:18 says, But the path of the just is as shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Thus, fellowship with God increases, and the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. His blood keeps constantly cleansing us from sins that we know nothing about in our lives, by reason that we have not grown in grace enough to see that they are sin.

In verse eight, John refutes the Gnostics again in saying, If we say that we have no sin, as this is what they believed; that is, that they were above sin. He says we still have a sinful nature which has to be counted dead; and, if we are ignorant or unlearned of this fact, we deceive ourselves -- we lead ourselves astray. But, in confessing our sins (and notice John includes himself, and is speaking of believers), we agree with God and His Word as to the two natures in the believer.

A wonderful example of confessing is David in Psalm 51, after his sin with Bathsheba. His heart became so contrite (crushed to powder), and God revealed His grace to David in such a precious way. Another example is Peter in Luke 22: 57-62, during and after his denial of Jesus. No doubt, the look Jesus gave him crushed his heart to powder also. All who experience these times, and we all do, learn that - He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He is not only faithful in His very nature (2 Timothy 2:13); but also to us (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:24). The word just is "righteous." It has been said, "Righteousness is truth passing into action." When David prayed in Psalm 51:15 he said, O Lord open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. This was truth passing into action out of his being. The members of our body become instruments of righteousness as we walk in the light (Romans 6:13).

David's sin was a single act, and this is what John is speaking of here. They should be infrequent and isolated in the life of a believer as he walks with God, because the more we walk with Him the more we love Him, and we do not want to grieve our Father's heart and disrupt the fellowship between us. During the time of this act of sin, defilement has entered in so the believer has to be cleansed. Defilement is then upon him, and, many times others are included, as in the case in 1 Corinthians 5. This was later confessed and the whole assembly profited (1 Corinthians 7). Verse ten speaks of a perfectionist who is ignorant of God's Word and makes God a liar.

For me to live is Christ,
He did beget my life,
Created in Christ Jesus, from above;
By Him I live, and in Him do I move,
Apart from Him, in death I still would prove;
He is my life.
For me to live is Christ,
He doth my life sustain
He is my strength, my fortress, and my stay,
He doth each fiber of my being sway,
He guides and keeps and helps me on my way
In joy or pain.
For to me to live, is Christ to live in me
The life I live, is but His life in mine,
E'en as the branch contains the life of vine
The throbblings of His life, my life entwine;
He lives in me.

CHAPTER TWO

Fellowship Maintained by the Advocacy of Jesus Christ

As we said, John was advanced in age when he wrote this epistle, having been through his experience on the Isle of Patmos; and he uses tenderness and affection in writing. From his words in verse one we see that he wants them to pursue holiness, and not be discouraged in doing so. Also, not to be embolden to sin by saying, If we do, Christ's blood will cleanse us. Paul says in Romans 6:1-2, Shall we continue in sin, that

grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? An example is given of a physician telling his patient, "Your trouble is obstinate, the poison is in your blood, and it will take a long time to eradicate it. But I do not tell you this to discourage you nor make you careless; no, on the contrary, to make you watchful and diligent in the use of the remedy." Our remedy is the Word of God.

John continues, And if any man (a believer) sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Jesus is facing (with) the Father and, as that confession is made, the sin is covered or remitted and the alienation it caused has been removed. God is satisfied because Jesus' blood covers the sin of a believer as well as that of the whole world, if men would avail themselves of it.

How can we, as believers, be assured that Christ is my Propitiation, my advocate? Verses three to six give us the answers. First: By keeping His commandments or precepts or charge. These are not the Mosaic commandments. Second: By walking even as He walked. Skill comes by patient practice. Rembrandt's advice to a pupil was, "Put well in practice what you already know; and in doing so you will, in good time, discover the hidden things that you inquire about."

Let us look more closely at these verses. He said, In this we do know. It is by gaining spiritual knowledge and experiencing this knowledge day by day in the guarding and observing of it, with a great desire that we not disobey. Paul said, Be not high minded, but fear (Romans 11:20). Also, Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (I Corinthians 10:12). It is recognizing, as Jeremiah says, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9). The Gnostics in their piousness would explode saying,

"I know Him"; but they knew nothing of keeping His precepts so, therefore, the Truth was not in them.

The word whoso in verse five destroys the exclusive attitude of the Gnostic. Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected (completed). A child of God who is obedient is a subject of the work of Divine love, in which this love accomplishes its perfect work. The work is accomplished in obedience because he loves Jesus, not in order to escape chastisement or because it is his right. Galatians five teaches that law is not the compelling urge to obey, but Divine love produced by the Holy Spirit.

The abiding, in verse six, means "to remain, sojourn, tarry" and implies much more than our position. It speaks of fellowship, communion, dependence, and harmony. It is even as he walked, a continual experience, not spasmodic. This is something we "ought" to do for we are indebted to Jesus, under obligation to Him, because He purchased us with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

As John begins this next section, verses 7-17, he states that the precepts were not new. They had His Word from the beginning, and in this Word God's will had been revealed. It is new in the sense that the Word became flesh and dwelt among them, and that the Divine nature could be in them. Again we quote Paul who says - For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 4:6) The light causes the darkness to pass away. It is as a parade that is going down the street, as we walk in or toward the Light. This Light is the true Light. It is that which God is in His very essence, in contrast to the false or spurious light. Satan covers himself outwardly with an assumed light. It does not proceed from within him, nor is it representative of what he is (2 Corinthians 11:14).

In verses nine to eleven John lets us know in an emphatic way that there is no room for hate in the Light. Hatred is the denial of fellowship, it destroys fellowship, and it belongs to the realm of darkness. This brother in verse nine is a fellow Christian, and is still in darkness experimentally.

In contrast, in verse ten, John says, He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light. The word love is "agapao" as in I Corinthians thirteen - Divine love. We have it illustrated in John 3:16, and we are told how it is produced in Romans 5:15 and Galatians 5:22-23. The whole essence of Divine love is self-sacrificial: it gives of itself for others. It can only be produced by the Holy Spirit as the believer habitually abides in the Lord. As he abides, there is no occasion for stumbling in him and he will not fall.

Verse eleven speaks of professors who have no knowledge of God. Likewise it speaks of believers, born again ones, who through failure to yield to the Lord or because of lack of proper teaching have let the old man rule their lives in this great war between the flesh and the Spirit.

Many do not know they have an old man. As we proceed, we see this truth confirmed in verses twelve to fourteen where spiritual maturity and fellowship are emphasized. First, we have little children, fathers, and then young men. They are all in the family of God. The little children, little born ones, have their sins put away and are assured of fellowship in the family, regardless of maturity. Their sins are forgiven for his name's sake. Jesus who emptied Himself, endured the Cross, and said, It is finished or "It stands finished," has been given a name which is above every name to which every knee should bow (Philippians 2:9-10).

John agrees with Paul in the unfolding of these truths as to the necessity of growth among believers. The

fathers are those with experimental knowledge and who have intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son. The young men are those growing in maturity. They are commended because they have overcome the wicked one. They have gained the victory over Satan and as a present result are standing on his neck, as Joshua stood on the necks of his captives (Joshua 10:24).

Even so, Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. These reasonings and high things, which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God and want to reign in us, must have their necks stood on. In the fourteenth verse, when speaking of these young men, John says they are strong - referring to the power of God given to them as part of their salvation. By the Word dwelling in their hearts and through the power of the Holy Spirit, they were given victory over Satan who sought to drag them down with him in ruin.

This same John in his Gospel, 17:14, quoted Jesus, They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. He is now, in these letters, writing against the dangers and perils of following the world. The word world is "kosmos" - ordered system - the world system alienated from God and hostile to God. Satan, is the head of this ordered system, and his subjects are the unsaved whose practices and purposes are against God and His Son.

The word love in verse fifteen is also "agapao," and is a love called out of one's heart by the preciousness of the object loved. As Demas loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). Some of John's readers were and still are loving this world system out of which they have been called.

What is the most precious to us? Things of Heaven or things of earth?

Now he details what this world embraces. First, the lust of the flesh, verse sixteen the depraved old nature which would govern an individual's reason, will, and emotions. It is centered on self and not on God. Second, the lust (desires) of the eyes which are those strong appetites which master the body, soul, and spirit through the gate of the eye. Third, the pride of life; that is, the display of godless living with all its vainglory. The word vain has a very descriptive meaning. It is "empty, braggart talk, display, and swagger," having a vain assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things in contempt of God's Word. All these are passing away as the world. Paul says in I Corinthians 7:31 - For the fashion (external condition) of this world passeth away. In contrast, the doer of God's will remains forever even as God abides forever, because we are joined to Him - linked to Him eternally in Christ - and are in a present unbroken fellowship with Him. What a blessed, peaceful, secure place to be. Our life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:2).

This next section, verses 18-29 of chapter two, covers a subject that is very vital in our day. John says, Little children, it is the last time, a critical season, a period of suffering before a Divine victory. As the Holy Spirit stirred John to pen these words as a warning to those in his day, these same words are a warning to us in our day. For truly we are in the last of the last time. Jesus speaking of a later period said that these anti-Christ's would deceive the very elect if possible (Matthew 24:23-24). The essential mark of anti-Christ is a display of any resistance to Christ. It is a denial of the doctrine that there is a Person, Jesus Christ. Those who went out from us and were not of us were never born again. They only believed intellectually, and did not have a heart acceptance that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. They were not of us because the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ was not dwelling in their vessels of clay. In 4:2-3 John says, Hereby know ye the spirit of God: And every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

About fifty-seven years prior to this writing, John had witnessed the Holy Spirit - the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them (Acts 2:2-3). He had witnessed believers being filled after Pentecost, so his words in verse twenty say in effect, "As a result of this anointing you as saints are given the ability to know all things." The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth ... for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it (lay it out) unto you (John 16:13-14). My, what wealth is at our disposal, as we yield to God and allow the Holy Spirit to open up these treasures. Also, He gives the saints the ability to detect error, and to try the spirits whether they are of God (4:1). There are many spirits even among God's people that are not in agreement with God's Word. But the Holy Spirit and the Word agree.

In verse twenty-two, John is speaking concerning a certain man named Cerinthus. (This man's name is handed down to us from church history). He was the liar, as the translation should be. He denied the virgin birth of Christ, and taught that after Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and then left at the end of His ministry. Today there are many like Cerinthus, who habitually are denying that Jesus is the Christ. The Name Jesus contains the truth of His deity, His humanity, and His sacrificial atonement, among

other truths. In the Name Christ we have the "anointed One," and this is the Name that Messiah comes from. To deny these truths is to reject everything we have received because of Jesus Christ.

God made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:21). And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). John says, in 1 John 2:23, Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not even the Father. These anti-Christ's may speak of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, but from God's standpoint they are not members of His family. Of this we read in Romans 9:8, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Man without Christ is depraved, unregenerate, and cannot abide in the love of God, because he knows nothing of God's Divine sacrificial love in sending His Son to die for his sin in order to lift him out of it. In contrast to the above, God's people are exhorted in verse twenty-four to allow the Truth into which they have been brought to abide, to remain in them. They are to hold it fast, and not allow any false teacher to entangle them in any heresy.

Paul says, Grow up into him (Christ) in all things (Ephesians 4:15). This is accomplished only by walking in the light, and letting more light possess us. John contrasts this so emphatically with the darkness where sin is still active. The old man, if not counted dead, will control the believer; therefore causing him, because of sin in the flesh to walk in darkness. The old man is in a realm of darkness; but, by counting ourselves dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, the believer learns to habitually walk in the light. This truth, John emphasizes and writes not only to those in his day but to us, in order that we will not be seduced nor led astray. In verse twenty-seven the words, The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, agree with Paul's words in Ephesians 1:13, Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

Before Pentecost He was with them (John 14:17), and they were moved by Him (2 Peter 1:21); but now He abideth in you permanently. We cannot be refilled, only refreshed.

The words in this verse, Ye need not that any man teach you, mean that the saints are not at the mercy of Gnostic teachers as the ultimate source of their instruction. God has set spiritual teachers in the Church to expound His Word; and, as it is expounded, the Holy Spirit takes these things of God and reveals them. It is the Divine Word of God going out, it is truth; and the Holy Spirit does not lie. He teaches Truth.

Therefore, the need of God's teachers giving out God's Word; for in His Word is life, and that life is the light of men (John 1:4). We will not be seduced by the enemy, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

This verse twenty-eight unfolds the truth of the instantaneous calling away of God's people; and, when we are before Him, that we will not be ashamed nor shrink from Him because we have not continued to abide in the Truth. Enoch habitually walked with God: and he was not; for God took him (Genesis 5:24). His fellowship with God did not change after he was with Him. Our fellowship with Jesus cannot be changed after we see Him face to face. Now is the day to abide in Him and to walk in the light. We know absolutely and also experimentally that the righteousness which we have is from Christ in us; that this Divine Nature is producing the fruits of righteousness. Praise the Lord, for this precious revelation which we receive. It has not come by any works of righteousness which we have done, but by continually depending on and needing Jesus Christ every day. He brings us to this place.

For me to live is Christ, He did beget my life
Created in Christ Jesus, from above; By Him I live, and in Him do I move,
Apart from Him, in death I still would rove; He is my life.
For me to live is Christ, He doth my life sustain
He is my strength, my fortress, and my stay,
He doth each fiber of my being sway,
He guides and keeps and helps me on my way In joy or pain.
For to me to live, is Christ to live in me
The life I live, is but His life in mine,
E'en as the branch contain the life of vine
The throbbings of His life, my life entwine; He lives in me.

CHAPTER THREE

Identifying Children of God and Children of the Devil

In John's introduction of this special love letter, his heart is suddenly overwhelmed with the manner or kind of love that would bring us into such a place before the Father. The word manner is "potatem" in the Greek,

and means "from what country, race, or tribe." It speaks of something foreign, and this love is foreign to the human race. It is not found in the natural man. This love was commended toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Man was God's enemy and his heart was in rebellion to God; yet God chose to make man a repository of this love. It has been bestowed upon all who become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). It becomes a permanent possession of the recipient. Our standing is brought out in the expression called the sons of God or children of God. The word manner is also used by Peter in II Peter 3:11 where he speaks of what manner of persons ought ye to be.

More blessed Scriptures on this manner of love are John 15:12-13 and I John 4:10-11. This love is the greatest of all. Paul says in Ephesians 3:19 that it passeth or surpasseth knowledge. It is the more excellent way that he pointed the saints to in I Corinthians thirteen. The gifts would be used to glorify God and to edify the saints while on earth, but this Divine love will never vanish away. IT BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT TO US THAN THE GIFTS. We increase and abound in this love more as we increase in Him, willing to gladly spend and be spent, counting not our lives dear unto ourselves. Paul loved this way, and we as co-laborers together with him are brought into an understanding of that love as we lay down our lives for others. The world does not know this love, as it is acquired only through experiencing it. The world here represents the world-system of evil. This manner of love, being Divine, compasseth God's Divine will. The more we increase in this love, the more we do His will. Jesus did, in Luke 2:49; 22:41-42; Matthew 12:46-50.

John says, Now are we the sons of God. We cannot become a son after passing from this earth.

Nor can we be brought immediately into spiritual maturity in an instant of time. Only fear and despair fill a person who does not know whether he is born of God until after death. Now we can be a son of God and grow into fullest sonship and enjoy deepest fellowship with Jesus and our Father; yet it is not made manifest or visible what we shall be. The word what speaks of something unspeakable - made like God. It will be manifested when we are taken up and brought face to face with Jesus - we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. Oh, glory to God!

What a future is before us! We will be physically as well as spiritually like Him. Now the inward spiritual work is done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 3:20-21 from the Wuest translation is outstanding on the above verses: "For the commonwealth of which we are citizens, has its fixed location in Heaven, out from which we with our attention withdrawn from all else, are eagerly waiting to welcome the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to receive Him to ourselves: who will transform our humiliated body, conforming it to the body of His glory, by means of the energy through which He is able to marshal all things under Himself."

It is because of this glorious hope of seeing the Lord and being like Him, that we are spurred on to do something about our state. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. We have to have this manner of love in us - have a standing in Christ - then the purification of our state, or our behavior, will follow. It is not accomplished by our own good works, but through the Word and the operating power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

John's aim in these verses is directed against Gnostic teaching that justifies sin. It states that the body, in any event, is evil; and that no harm comes in satisfying its lusts or seeking pleasure, because the body is unimportant. This is why such teaching denies the reality of Jesus' physical body saying that God, a pure Spirit, would not soil Himself by taking upon Himself flesh and blood. But John says in verse two, we shall be like him physically in whatever extent we are like Him now. That includes our bodies which are holy unto God - Romans 12:1. The word purifieth in verse three carries the same word meaning as "cleanse" in 1:9.

As we look into verse four, we will quote it from the Amplified New Testament: "Everyone who commits (practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for (that is what) sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violating of God's law by transgression or neglect; being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will)." This is what God's definition of sin is. Man breaks God's law because he is a lawless being. It is not his nature to want anyone to rule over him; he prefers that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). He resents authority. But for this very reason God put man under law, in order to bring out this evil tendency, which will convict man of his sinful condition. He gave Adam one law and he broke it. Israel said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do (Exodus 19:8). He gave them the ten commandments which are holy, and just, and good, and they failed in observing them - Romans 7:12. Today, lawlessness is increasing because man continues to rebel against God, calling it his right to of iniquity is "the mystery of lawlessness."

However, Jesus was manifested to take away our sins (3:5). A child of God, because he is born of God, does not habitually sin. Titus 2:14 says, Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Christ had no sinfulness, lawlessness, nor

disobedience to His Father. He said in John 4:34, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. In I John 3:6 we will again read from the Amplified New Testament: "No one who abides in Him - who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him, (deliberately and knowingly) habitually commits (practices) sin. No one who habitually sins has neither seen or known Him - recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or has had an experimental acquaintance with Him."

It is unthinkable that anyone, who knows and loves the Lord and lives in precious communion with Him, could be in rebellion and be indifferent to God. But it is a possibility because of our old man, as 1:8 states. We are not above sin so, therefore, we have an advocate with the Father - 2:1. However, sin is the exception and not the rule with the Christian. He does not live in sin, though he may be overtaken by it or fall into it. It has been said that a sheep may fall into a mud puddle; but, it is not going to wallow in it, as swine do.

This sixth verse shows plainly the two natures. In the seventh verse, John is speaking of the evidence of the new life within a child of God; that is, eternal life is manifested in us. Praise the Lord! We are beings of eternity. Under the law, the righteous man sought to become righteous by doing that which he felt outwardly would be acceptable to God. But, under grace, he does righteously for he has been made righteous by a righteous nature within. This is why the Apostle Paul had such conflicts within and without, after the Lord revealed to him that Christ was in him to work out His righteousness from within. Remember in Philipians 3:6 he said he was as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. All that was outward. So we can now fully understand the battles he had in Romans seven; and how, through yielding his vessel to that righteousness of Christ within, God gave him victory, in Romans eight. In verse six we have the inner life of a believer, and in the seventh verse we have the outer practice of the believer.

As we look into verse eight, let us keep in mind the definition of sin in verse four. Sin is "lawlessness," and this will enable us to understand better what John is talking about. The very thing that marked Satan was pride and rebellion against God. Isaiah 14:13-14 tells us: For thou hast said thou heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Satan himself fell because of pride and the desire to exalt himself and to be all-wise.

It is this very strategy that Satan used on Eve in the garden. Let us notice that while the woman saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, Satan only tempted her in regard to the third count - the desire to make one wise, to be like God. It was in just that way that the devil sinned from the beginning.

Those who speak of being sinless exhibit a great deal of pride in making that claim. A subtle spirit of spiritual superiority is shown. Pride shines out, and that is the very sin mentioned in verse eight. When they speak of being sinless in the flesh, no doubt, they really mean they do not steal, drink, kill, nor are guilty of unclean lusts. But our verse indicates such types of sin are not considered here. It is quite evident that Satan did not commit any of those physical lusts and sins, for he had no body with which to sin after that manner. Satan's sin was pride, lawlessness and defiance. It is that attitude that marks one who has never been born of God. A Christian may fall into sin when he walks a careless life and is out of touch with God. This grieves the heart of the Father; but, even as the sheep that falls into the hog mire, he will not remain for it is not his nature to want to live in that condition.

So the reason or purpose that the Son of God was manifested was that he might destroy the works of the devil (3:8). The term, works of the devil, represents a certain consistency and coherence. But Christ came and revealed their inconsistency. He destroyed, He loosed, and dissolved the bonds by which they seemed to be held together. Acts 2:24 states, Having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

So, in 3:9, John speaks of the character of this new life in us. It is not attached to sin. As every seed produces after its kind, this incorruptible seed, as Peter calls it in I Peter 1:23, is Divine and sinless and can produce only that which is holy and sinless. It is that which is born of God, and doth not commit sin. This includes every believer the moment he is saved. God's seed remaineth in him. It cannot be plucked out. This verse has been used in ignorance by those who boast that they do not sin any more. They are confused because they do not understand that, at the present, the believer has two seeds - Adam's and God's - in one body. Sometimes he permits the old Adamic nature to show itself forth, and then again the Divine life is active. James says it is not right to let blessing and cursing come "out of the same mouth" James 3:10, 18. The children of the devil, John 8:44 and Acts 13:10, can only produce unrighteousness. He cannot love his brother, because that Divine nature of love from God is not in him.

As we continue, John emphatically states the recognition of a true believer in verse eleven. To love our

brother is far more difficult than to love God, because we see the failings of sin of our brother; and God never fails or sins. Also, God responds to our love to Him where our brother may not. Christian growth becomes progressive, when brethren love brethren, as seen in 2 Peter 1:4-8. By partaking of the Divine nature, the believer can and does develop spiritually.

brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Cain was of that wicked one, of Satan, who seeks to draw everyone else down with himself into the corruption and destruction that await him. We are given to understand in this verse, the method Cain used to destroy Abel, by the word slew. It means to "slay, slaughter, butcher by the throat." Genesis 4:8-10 gives the account. The cutting of the jugular vein, where much blood is shed, would fit this description.

Why were Cain's works evil? Because there was no bloodshed in his offering, the sacrifice which God required. By Cain bringing the fruit of the ground, he denied that he needed atonement or a righteous covering (Genesis 4:3). He was claiming a place of fellowship with God on the basis of his own works. The very ground from which he took his offering was cursed by God. Abel, on the other hand, needed God and brought of the firstlings of the flock. By doing so, he admitted that he was fallen and that he needed a Savior. However, when God had respect unto Abel and to his offering and no respect for Cain's, this brought forth the wrath that was in Cain's fallen nature.

God saw it and knew it was there all along. Upon Abel, Cain showed it forth, by slaying him. Just think, the righteousness Abel had, because he obeyed God, caused Cain to so act.

John says in verse thirteen, "Stop marveling, my brethren, if the world hate you." To be rejected is a trial for any saint; but to be approved by God is worth it all, a far more exceeding weight of glory. As for us who have passed out of death into life permanently, the Divine love of our Divine life grows and loves in us. Cain had envy in his heart against Abel, and that envy destroyed him and, his relationship with others. Envy distorts one's motives and destroys, while love fulfills and blesses others. Verse fifteen is speaking of one who habitually hates his brother. He is not living in the sphere of eternal life, but in the sphere of flesh; and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

The only solution from hate and death is by perceiving the love of God. Perceive speaks of knowledge gained by experience. We have experienced the love of God by becoming recipients of salvation. He laid down his life for us (v.16). The word life here is "psuche" in Greek, and means "soul." Jesus' death involved not only His physical death, but abandonment from God because of human sin laid on Him. It was that sin that reached His soul causing Him to cry out, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1). As we grow in the Lord and increase in His love we, too, become willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. Little do we know or can we imagine, where the hands and feet of God's love in us will take us or what they will cause us to do, as He controls our hearts. He governs love.

If we constantly possess the necessities of life and deliberately snap shut our hearts when a brother has continual needs, how dwelleth the love of God in us? (3:17). We need to live in the sphere of deed and truth, and not in the sphere of word or tongue (3:18). Sometimes we are apt to look on the martyrs who laid down their lives as heroic, and applaud them. But doing the little day by day things, the little self-denials which no one notices and no one applauds, is also laying down our lives and is the most difficult.

When and if our heart condemn us, verse twenty, the Lord soothes the alarms within causing us to know that we are in His hands and He knows the worst that is in us. All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). He sees the real things, the deepest desires of the heart. David was a man after mine (God's) own heart (Acts 13:22), because the general tenor of his life was habitually Godward (Psalm 66:18-20). The Psalms reveal the heart of David. "God is greater than our heart." He surpasses man in love and compassion, and our discovery of what is within us has been known to Him all along.

In 3:21, John says, Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

This is the heart attitude of a saint who, as far as he knows, has judged all sin in his life. He is yielding day by day to the Lord, and is in close fellowship with Him. The Holy Spirit has given such a one confidence and boldness in speaking the Word. The word toward is "facing" or "face to face with God." We learn not to listen to the superficial judgments of mans and let God judge us who knows all things, because we have been "face to face with Him" in the sanctuary, and have heard His will (I Corinthians 4:3, 4). As we abide in Him, we desire only His will and ask only the things pertaining to that Divine will of God and that are pleasing in his sight (3:22). Such a saint dwelleth in him, and he in him (3:24). We allow the Lord to settle down and feel completely at home in our hearts. All this work is done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This wonderful third chapter is understood so little by God's people, yet the truths in it give the secret of overcoming. We pray that God will unveil the hearts of the hungry, as these Scriptures are studied.

Under His shadow with delight,
I sat enrapt and free;
His presence filled my soul with light
His smile my courage did incite,
His love my confidence invite;
He's all the world to me.

LOVE MADE MANIFEST

Carlan S. Messler

"Tis this reveals our Saviour's love,
And manifests its worth:
He left His glory-home above
To die for all the earth.
And this the Father's love made plain:
That He would freely give
His Son to be so cruelly slain,
That we might ever live.
How great, how wonderful the love
That drew salvation's plan!
How deep, how broad, how far above
The greatest thought of man!
And yet, how plainly 'twas expressed!
I cannot fail to see
The love of God made manifest,
When Jesus died for me.

CHAPTER FOUR

Marks or Tests of False Prophets

In verses one to six of this chapter, John contrasts the spirit of truth and the spirit of error showing the saints, the "beloved," how to discern between them. Some in his day were being carried away with the error of the Gnostics.

Believe not every spirit (4:1). This is a habit we are to be in, of refusing to believe every spirit. In I Timothy 4:1, Paul says that false teachers are moved by devils or "demons." John says they have already gone out into the world. So God's people are to try or prove the spirits with an attitude that is good, with the hope that what is tested will stand the test of God's Word. It is not to put to the test in order to condemn, but with the intent to approve whether they are of God; that is, tested by the Scriptures. Man's conscience or any church doctrine is not the guide.

In verses two and three, John so simply gives the test which will prove that the Holy Spirit is controlling a speaker - if he confesses that he is in agreement with God, that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us or is come in the flesh (John 1:14; I John 4:2). This is directed especially to the Gnostics who said the body was too evil for God to dwell in. In Hebrews 2:14 Paul says, As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. In Colossians 2:9 the same Paul says, In him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He had to identify Himself with us to save us - had to be in all points tempted like as we are (Hebrews 4:15). Our natural minds cannot fathom what it was really like for God's Son to become condescended into a world opposed to everything holy and pure. But, because He did, our bodies can be consecrated and dedicated to our Lord and are the temples of the Triune God.

Oh, let us grasp this truth as never before, and let Him truly be our Lord in every sector of our lives.

In verse four, we see that some saints in John's day refused to listen to the false teachers and overcame them. It was Christ who dwelled in them who was their victory. The incorruptible Seed is greater than the evil one - the prince of this world (John 12:31); or the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). Christ, the Seed of David, overcame Satan - body, soul, and spirit.

In verse five they the false teachers, are of the world. They are endued and energized with the spirit of anti-Christ, in contrast with the "Spirit of God" or "he that is within you" (vs. 2, 4).

John says, in verse six, as for us, We are of God. We are not completed yet in our spiritual knowledge; but, we are progressing, growing in experimental knowledge - Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ

Jesus (Philippians 3:12). This is up to each saint himself, to know Him in this progressive experience. Our will must kneel to His will in our lives. Hereby, in this chapter, means "from this." If one is listening and learning from John's message, profiting thereby, he is of the spirit of truth; but, if one pays no attention and is not willing to learn, he is of the spirit of error. The spirit of truth produces Divine love which enables us to know God, to realize His love flowing out to us - comforting and strengthening.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us by sending his only begotten Son to manifest His Divine nature and enable us to be partakers of the divine nature and live through him (v. 9), to enable us to live eternally in glory with Him rather than die in spiritual darkness (II Peter 1:4; I John 4:9). This Divine love consists in his Son laying down His life that His blood could cover our sins (4:10). His love for us covered a multitude of sins. In His love for us, He admonishes

(Matthew 10:39) He that findeth his (natural) life shall lose it: and he that loseth his (natural) life for my sake shall find it. Paul counted not his life dear unto himself, as Acts 20:24 states. God's Divine love truly reigned in Paul's life.

In verse eleven, the word beloved is used for the sixth and last time in this epistle. The word being used is also in 3:2, 21 and in 4:1, 7. It is in 2:7 where it is translated brethren. The word so in verse eleven is emphasized - so loved us, we ought also to love one another. The obligation then rests on the great and precious truth of atonement.

In verse twelve and thirteen, God is emphasized as a Spirit; and Moses, in Hebrews 11:27, saw him who is invisible. His Spirit or Presence is not external. He abides in us and His existence in us is demonstrated through the character of that love, as He perfects or fulfills it in us. We know that he abideth in us (3:24). Hereby know we that we dwell in him (4:13). It is twofold. The Holy Spirit quickened our hearts and put that Divine Life in us; and now, He produces Divine fruit within us, especially Divine love which is the very nature of God for God is love.

In 4:14 John says that he emphatically saw, along with his fellow apostles, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. They beheld God in the Son, who was and is the expression of God.

In verse fifteen they confessed, agreed with God, as to the Deity of Jesus; and God dwelt in them and they in God. In verse two, the confession was in respect to His humanity. Here it implies surrender and obedience to the Life within, and not mere lip service. We allow Him to feel at home in these vessels. All believers, as we in verse sixteen includes, all who have confessed that Jesus is the Son of God are experiencing God's love within - growing in knowledge and spiritual understanding.

In verses 17-21, John enlarges upon our knowledge of God - His nature and our privilege of intimate communion with Him, plus the effect of that communion. When we have manifested His Divine love to others, we have a reason to have boldness in the day of judgment. We have the assurance because as he is, so are we in this world. Only in this way is our love made perfect. That Divine character is shown out in us as we identify ourselves with Him.

In verse eighteen, John says, There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, or expels fear. As God's love is perfected in us, there is no room for fear of meeting Him and being disapproved (I Corinthians 9:27; II Corinthians 5:9-12; Romans 8:15; 14:10). He that feareth speaks of a habitual state of fearing (4:18). The reason that we divinely love is because he first loved us (4:19). The word "him" in this verse is not in the original manuscript. The apostle is not speaking of our showing love to God in response to His love to us, but that no exercise of Divine love is possible apart from God's love to us. We have to have something before it can be used, as is borne out in the following verses. If the evil character of our old nature is shown out toward our brothers and sisters in Christ and we say that we love God, we are a liar. However much we may know the Truth or doctrine of love, there is no real comprehension or appreciation of it if we refrain from showing love to our brother. It takes faith to love God whom we have not seen, and faith and love work together; so they are both from God and are Divine (Galatians 5:6). That Divine love gives and serves - by love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

CHAPTER FIVE

Faith in God's Word Brings Victory

In this chapter the words faith and believe are used for the first time in this epistle. The first twelve verses deal especially with faith, which is the source of the life of love. We read, Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born (has been begotten) of God (5:1). Read John 1:12; 3:2- 8; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3 in connection with the word begotten. In this verse (5:1), John is speaking of the inward expression or the believing that lies beyond the confessing. While in 4:15 he is speaking of the outward expression,

confessing Jesus as the Son of God. The outward confessing through faith leads to an inward exercise of love. Divine love is exhibited to God and to His people. It is a love that gives unselfishly. Galatians 5:6 states - faith which worketh by love. In 5:2 we are made to know by constant experience that the test of our love to God is loving one another. As the reality of His love is revealed in our hearts, the practical experience of loving one another follows. His commandments, verse three, are the expression of His love. As dear children (Ephesians 5:1), we are to love one another; as I have loved you (John 13:34). Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us (Ephesians 5:2). This is not grievous nor "heavy, burdensome, severe, cruel, stern" as the word "grievous" means. But it is light - For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:30). By them is thy servant warned (taught, admonished): and in keeping of them there is great reward (Psalm 119:11). The burden only comes when a saint disobeys God's will.

The word whatsoever, in 5:4, gives less prominence to the person who overcomes and more to the power given to him through the new birth. Those begotten of him, verse one, have a lasting power for victory over the world; that is, faith not only brings to us the new birth, but with it the power to overcome the spirit of the world. Again we emphasize that those who are begotten of God have passed spiritually out of this world into union with Christ, and should be governed by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2).

The word overcome, in verses four and five, implies a battle. It means "to carry off the victory," or "come off victorious." It is a habit of saints to gain victory over the world. The world-system of evil, the flesh (totally depraved nature), and the devil, are all forces engaged in a battle against the saint to try and bring him to ruin. So the saint has to constantly overcome; and we do this through faith, clinging to eternal realities, as the worthies of faith did in Hebrews eleven. They were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13). Praise the Lord! We are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37). It is not a dream, but can be a living reality in our lives.

We see in verse six that the water and blood are both necessary for life, and meet a double need.

Blood came out of Jesus' side (John 19:34). The water indicates life imparted through cleansing from sin on the basis of the death of Christ. It speaks of sanctification and cleansing, and is man's side of redemption. In Leviticus fourteen, the leper needed not only the blood of sacrifice (14:14) but, he was required to bathe his flesh in water, verses six and seven. Also, in Exodus 29:19-20 and Leviticus 8:6, 23, blood and water were applied to Aaron and his sons, representing the priestly life. It is bestowed on His priests today.

The blood speaks of justification, and is God's side of redemption (Romans 3). In Leviticus 17:11 we read that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Through the blood of Jesus His life is bestowed, imputed to us; and we are counted righteous. The Holy Spirit quickeneth (John 6:63), and bears witness in the heart as to the Person and work of Christ. He is Deity because He is Truth (v. 6). Also see John 14:6, 15:26; and God is truth (Psalm 31:5). The Triune God - these three agree and have one object and effect (5:7-8). The word if, in verse nine, is translated, "as we do." As we do receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. It is not merely concerning a Person named Jesus, but concerning the witness of Jesus as the Son of God. By our continual attitude of faith we bear witness of God, but to not accept Him is to bear falsehood to Him making Him a liar. To believe the record is to end the uncertainty and controversy regarding Christ as the Son of God (5:10).

John gathers up or summarizes, in verses eleven and twelve, what he has set forth in this epistle.

In 1:1 he said that Jesus was the Word of Life. By believing in Him we have Life and Light, chapters one and two. Also, in the Life we have faith (5:4). Love has been bestowed upon us (3:1). When we have His Life, His Light, faith and love, we do not need to be reminded that He is the Son of God for we are also the sons of God born from above as He was.

The purpose of John in writing this epistle and his object is that ye may know (positively) that ye have eternal life, and to confirm our faith. The Gospel of John was written to exhibit the Son of God, and this first epistle was written to commend Him. He is addressing you that believe in contrast with the unbelievers.

In verse fourteen, we have this word confidence again. It was mentioned in 2:28 in connection with freedom from shame at the judgment seat of Christ. Also, we have it in 3:21 in connection with the possession of a clear conscience toward God, and in 4:17 as to the perfection of God's love in us and our likeness to Him. Here, in 5:14, confidence or boldness is the assurance of the believer's attitude that God hears and answers prayer - according to his will. We do not first ascertain His will and then pray; but pray, "If it be Thy will." In His Will He has given us the best (Romans 9:27). Because we are joined to Christ and our will becomes subject to His will we are assured that the petitions asked of Him, that are presented in the spirit of unselfishness and submission, have already been granted (5:15). What confidence this puts in our hearts as we kneel before him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

In the first part of verse sixteen we read of a sin which is not unto death. This is a condition that would lead unto death if not judged. In Hebrews 12:1, Paul calls it a sin of unbelief - the sin which doth so easily beset us. James 5:19-20 is a wonderful commentary on this - Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner (or a brother who had sinned a sin not unto death) from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. The brother can give him life by prayer and admonition before it leads unto death.

The second part of verse sixteen speaks of the sin unto death. In I Corinthians 5:5 Paul had authority from God to turn the offender over to Satan that he might go the limit after the flesh so that, if he would not learn his lesson his spirit would be saved. The person in I Corinthians five did learn his lesson however (II Corinthians 2:6-8). In Acts five, Ananias and Sapphira did not. Many saints do not learn their lesson, and those who pray or admonish must leave the matter with God and obey the Word.

We saw in 3:4 that sin is lawlessness, an act of unrighteousness. In 5:17 there is a warning against unrighteousness which also includes a need of tenderheartedness as to the wrongs of others, and which leads us to intercede for them.

In the summation, 5:18-21, John begins with the first of the three expressions: we know. We know there is a power at the disposal of every believer to enable him to keep himself from sin (2:1, 14, 20; 3:6, 9; 4:13; 5:4). The evil or wicked one may assault an individual saint, but he cannot sever the connection between him and Christ (John 10:28, 29; Romans 8:35).

In verse nineteen we know we are begotten of God; and, because of this, we have power and are separated from the world (2:29; 5:4-5). The third we know states that, because of the new birth, we may have the anointing of the Holy Spirit and have an abiding relationship with the Father and the Son (5:20). The word understanding is the ability to think deeply. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:10). Eternal life is given through Christ and ministered unto the saints.

Keep yourselves from idols (5:21). This is a decisive command. There is no hesitation or wavering, and it is to be constantly carried out. An idol is anything that would mar the spiritual life which Christ wants to live out in us. It is not only physical things, but includes any false conceptions that occupy the mind and obscure the vision of faith.

GREAT GOD OF WONDERS

Samuel Davies

Great God of wonders!
All Thy ways Are matchless,
Godlike, and Divine.
But fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine.
In wonder lost, with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God -
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood.
Oh, may this strange, this matchless grace,
This Godlike miracle of love,
Fill the whole earth with grateful praise,
And all the angelic choirs above.