

FAITHFUL MEN · A LIBRARY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICS

Epistles of John and Jude

H. A. Ironside

Faithful Men

PlymouthBrethren.org · KEE Philippine Missions

Original edition: First Edition, 1931. © 2001 by Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Neptune, New Jersey. Introductory Notes from Gaebele's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible © 1970, 1985 by Loizeaux Brothers, Inc..

Faithful Men, from PlymouthBrethren.org and KEE Philippine Missions. Free to read and share; not for sale.

“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

1 John: Introductory Notes

by Arno C. Gaebele

First John is not addressed to any one church nor does it mention, like the other New Testament Epistles, the author of the document; it is anonymous. However, we are not left in doubt as to who wrote this Epistle. There can be no question that the author of the fourth Gospel is also the author of 1 John. Its opening statement is linked with the opening of the Gospel, and throughout the Epistle are found the thoughts and language of the fourth Gospel. Inasmuch then as that Gospel is indisputably the work of the apostle John, this Epistle is also the work of his inspired pen.

While the internal testimony confirms conclusively the Johannine authorship of the Epistle, there is also a mass of historical evidence that attributes the Epistle to the beloved disciple. The oldest testimony as to the genuineness and the authorship of this Epistle is that of Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the apostle John. Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, frequently quoted the Epistle and stated that it was John's. After Polycarp and Irenaeus, every authority among the church fathers mentioned this Epistle as being the work of the apostle John. In harmony with this evidence is the testimony of the oldest fourth century Greek manuscripts, which give the title of the Epistle as *Joannou-A*—that is, “John 1.”

When and Where Was It Written?

The Epistle itself gives no definite answers to these questions. Some have attempted to fix the date as being before the

destruction of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70. They base their assumption on 1 John 2:18 and claim that “the last time” means the closing days for Jerusalem, which is incorrect. The phrase “the last time” has in this Epistle the same meaning as in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 3:1 and therefore does not mean the last days before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed.

It is clear that John wrote the fourth Gospel record first and this Epistle after that. The Gospel and this Epistle were written possibly about the year 90, preceding the Revelation, which was written about the year 96.

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

To Whom Was It Written?

The fact that, unlike the other Epistles, 1 John starts without any address or introductory greeting and ends without any closing salutation, has led some to call it a treatise rather than an Epistle. But the personal address and appeal at the end and the style throughout fully sustain the epistolary character. Others such as Michaelis have termed the Epistle a second part of the Gospel, while still others speak of it as an introduction to the Gospel. That the Epistle is closely related to the Gospel is very true, but that does not necessitate a closer external relationship.

Dr. Bullinger, in *The Companion Bible*, suggested that this Epistle was originally addressed to believing Hebrews in the dispersion. This view was held by others such as Benson before him, but there is nothing whatever in the Epistle to warrant such a conclusion. On account of a remark by

Augustinus that John wrote “to the Parthians,” many commentators have adopted this view; however, it is without any foundation whatever.

The Epistle was evidently addressed to believers in a number of different churches. John was acquainted with these believers, who seem to have been mostly Gentile converts (see 5:21). If the tradition is true that the Epistle was written in Ephesus, it is not improbable that it was sent to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—the churches to whom the Lord sent messages a few years later when John was in Patmos.

The Purpose of the Epistle

The purpose of the Epistle was stated by the writer in two places: the first, 1:4, says, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”; the second, 5:13, says, “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.” According to John 20:31 this is also the purpose of the Gospel. The apostle wrote to those who believe on the Son of God and have that eternal life which was manifested in the Lord Jesus, which is imparted to all who believe on the Son of God, and which establishes fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Epistle has been rightly called a family letter; that is, believers are viewed as the family of God, and thus the word *teknia* (“children”) is used repeatedly.

The Gospel of John was written on account of the false teachings concerning the person of Christ that began in the

second half of the first century; and 1 John is very outspoken against errors regarding the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrificial work. Those errors flourished later under such names as gnosticism, docetism, and Montanism. While these evil doctrines and denials were not yet fully developed in John's day, they existed and increased, which explains the inclusion of the warnings in 2:18-26 and 4:1-6. What "antichristianity" is can be learned from these passages. All the evil systems of today, which are sweeping with increasing force through Christendom toward their divinely appointed and revealed doom, are exposed in this Epistle in their true character. These systems are branded by John as antichrists, all of which are finally to be merged into a personal antichrist, the "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

The Epistle has a deep spiritual message for the children of God. Because of the eternal life that God has imparted to believers, they should demonstrate the same characteristics that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, displayed in His blessed life. As born of God, they have God as their Father; they are children of God. God is light and God is love and therefore those who are born of God must also manifest light and love and walk in righteousness and in love.

Author's Introduction

The writings of the apostle John have always had a peculiar charm for the people of the Lord. This attraction is due, I suppose, to the fact that they are particularly addressed to the family of God.

If you want truth concerning the kingdom of God in its present aspect—the mystery days of the kingdom—you will find it in the Epistles of Peter, James, and Jude. If you desire truth concerning the church of God—the body of Christ which is being formed by the Spirit during the present dispensation of grace—you find that in the writings of the apostle Paul. But if you seek truth for the family of God—believers who have been born again into the divine family—you find that particularly in the writings of the apostle John. I do not mean, however, that any of these sections of Scripture are confined to the subjects indicated. While Peter deals primarily with the kingdom, he also speaks of the church and of the family of God. While Paul deals primarily with the church, he also speaks of the kingdom and of the family. And while John deals primarily with the family, he also has something to say about the church and about the kingdom. But, as indicated before, God gave a special ministry to each of these New Testament writers.

John's writings were the last given by the Spirit of God for our edification. There are some people who put, it seems to me, undue value on the writings of Paul, particularly his later prison Epistles, as though they contain the last instructions God had for His people. However, Paul had probably been in Heaven for over twenty years before the apostle John wrote

his Gospel. It was years later that John wrote his Epistles. The book of Revelation was, so far as we can learn, the last book given by the Spirit near the end of the first century. We may be sure of this much—that as God reserved the writings of the apostle John for the close of the apostolic age, He kept the best wine until the last.

In the Gospel of John we have eternal life as revealed in the Son of God. In the Epistles of John we have eternal life as revealed in the children of God. In John 20:30-31 the apostle gives his reason for writing that particular book. He said, “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Why was the Gospel of John written? In order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ. Is there any reader who doubts or questions whether Jesus is in fact the Christ of God? Read the Gospel of John. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). John’s Gospel was written that you might know, that you might “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Now look at 1 John 5:13, “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.” The Epistle was written to people who already believe that Jesus is the Christ, but have never been sure of their present position or their possession of eternal life. “That ye might *know*.” If you have any doubt as to the person, life, and atoning death of Jesus, as to His messiahship,

or His divinity, read the Gospel. But if, after having believed the message of the Gospel, you are still perplexed about the assurance of your salvation, whether you really possess eternal life or not, read the Epistle. It was written to “you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” The Epistle of John is the Epistle of fellowship. God wants His people to be in communion with Him, and John shows us the way to fellowship with God.

John used certain key words or phrases: “Ye *know*” or “we *know*.” He wants us to rest on nothing short of a definite, positive knowledge of divine reality. There is the word *believe*. This is one of his favorite words, both in the Gospel and in the Epistles. We also read a great deal about *light*—“God is light,” “Walk in light.” Then there is the word *love*—“God is love.” We are to “walk in love.”

After the death of Paul, somewhere around A.D. 67, there arose among the churches, particularly in Asia, a sect known today as gnostics. An agnostic is a man who says, “I do not know.” But a gnostic is the very opposite to an agnostic; the gnostic says, “I do know.” The gnostics came into the church and said, “We have superior knowledge to that of these simple Christians.” This sect grew very rapidly, and threatened for two hundred years to overwhelm the orthodox church of God. They had peculiar ideas regarding Jesus. Some of them thought Jesus was simply a man, the natural-born son of Joseph and Mary, and that Christ was the divine Spirit who took possession of Jesus at His baptism in Jordan. This Spirit was with Him through life, but left Him when He hung on the cross. Those who held this view were called Cerinthian gnostics, and there are groups today who still promote this false doctrine.

Cerinthian gnosticism is the basic doctrine in Christian Science, The Unity School of Christianity, Theosophy, and other modern cults. But this doctrine is thoroughly contrary to Scripture. 1 John 5:1 says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”—not that Jesus was possessed by the Christ or was controlled by the Christ, but He is the Christ. The one who hung on the cross was not only Jesus, the man of Nazareth, but Christ, the Son of God. “*Christ* died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). We must never distinguish between Jesus and the Christ any more than we would distinguish between Mr. Hoover and the President. Mr. Hoover is the President, and Jesus is the Christ. It is true that Christ is a title, but that title belongs to Him.

There was another set of gnostics, the docetists, who denied the reality of the manhood of Jesus—the reality of His human body. They held that evil was linked with the flesh, and therefore it was unthinkable that deity should ever condescend to dwell in a human body. The docetists believed that while you could look at Jesus, if you had tried to touch Him, you would have touched thin air—He was simply a phantom. John confronted both gnostic systems in his three Epistles.

1 John, Chapter 1: God Is Light

Reality of Christ's Manhood (1 John 1:1-4)

The opening verses of this chapter deal particularly with the docetic system. Listen to John, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)"

What John said is that eternal life was manifested on earth in a man. We heard that man speak, listened to His words, looked upon His face, and handled Him. We know that He was a real man. We walked with Him for three and one-half wonderful years. If you want the truth about Christ, do not believe these things that spring up overnight like mushrooms, but go back to that which was from the beginning. We may be sure of this, "What is new is not true, and what is true is not new."

There are three distinct beginnings emphasized in Scripture. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). That was the beginning of creation. Some speculate that was about six thousand years ago; it might have been much more than that, but the Bible does not say. But go back as far as you want and you still find that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Whenever that event took place, it was God who did it. He was there. He brought the universe into existence. It may have gone through a great many changes before the conditions described in the second verse of Genesis 1, but it was created by a personal God in the beginning—the beginning of creation. Then in John

1:1 we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” That is the unbeginningbeginning. When everything that ever had a beginning began, the Word *was*. He had no beginning but was the eternally existing Son subsisting in the bosom of the Father. Then in the first chapter of this Epistle, “That which was from the beginning” is not the beginning of the creation, neither is it the unbeginning beginning of John 1, but it is the beginning of the new dispensation—the beginning of Christianity when the truth was revealed in Christ.

There are several verses that support this interpretation. First John 2:7: “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had *from the beginning*. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard *from the beginning*” (italics added). This refers to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, the commandment given by Him. When was that given? From the beginning of Christianity, the beginning of the new dispensation. “The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.” In other words, John was saying, “Do not take up with anything new; go back to that which was from the beginning of Christianity.” Then read verse 14, “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning.” He was writing to the “fathers” who had known Him from the beginning of this new age of grace. Then in verse 24 we read, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” In 2 John 5 we find these words, “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

In other words, don't fall for something new. The message you received at the beginning is the message you must cling to and is the message that must abide in you. These passages make it clear that this term "from the beginning" does not, as some have thought, refer to eternity. It refers to the start of a new era.

When people come to you and say, "We have a new doctrine, a new teaching, a new system of thinking," you can say, "Keep it; as for me I will cling firmly to that which was from the beginning." We have a "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). When the Mormon says, "We believe the Bible, but we have the Mormon Bible too, and it is a new revelation," you can reply, "I do not need your new book. I have that which was from the beginning." When Mrs. Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy says, "Of course we believe the Bible, but here is my little book, *Science and Health*, which is something new," you can say, "Thank you, madam, but I do not need your *Key to the Scriptures*. The Word of God interpreted by the Holy Spirit is all I need." When the Swedenborgians say, "Sure, we believe the Bible, but we add to it the dreams and visions of Emanuel Swedenborg," we can reply in the words of Scripture, He "that hath a dream let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). When Pastor Russell and Judge Rutherford come along and say, "Of course we believe the Bible, but we must add to it our *Studies in the Scriptures* and *The Harp of God*, if you would really understand it," we can reply, "Keep all your seven or ten volumes; we will go back to that which we have heard from the beginning. We do not want anything added to the Scripture. We go back to what God gave at the start."

John showed that Jesus was a real man. He said in effect, “We have heard Him; we listened to His teaching as we walked with Him; we heard Him speak; we have seen Him with our eyes.” The gnostics said that He was merely a phantom, but John insisted on His true humanity, “That which we *have looked on intently*.” He was not deceived. If someone comes up to me and says, “I want you to meet my friend, Mrs. so-and-so;” I say, “I am glad to meet you,” and turn away because others are crowding about me. The next day I meet this person on the street and she says, “Don’t you know me? Why, I met you yesterday at the Moody Church.” I would have to say, “I’m sorry, I did not look intently enough to have your face impressed on me.” The apostle said, “We were not deceived. We saw Him and gazed intently on Him. We know He was a real man, and He filled the vision of our souls.” Then John added, “That which our hands have handled, of the Word of life.” It was not merely that he heard and looked, but he touched Him, and when he touched His arm, it was not thin air. When John leaned against Him at supper, it was not a delusion. Christ Jesus is a man of true flesh and blood!

What a wonderful thing it is that the very first truth in the Christian revelation is that God became man—the amazing grace of it. God came down into His own world as a man. He came near to us in order that He might reveal Himself to us and die for our sins. He was made a little lower than the angels in order that He might settle the sin question for us. And so the apostle said in 1 John 1:2, “For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” Think of it! Eternal life appeared on earth!

Do you want to know what eternal life really is in all its fullness, in all its purity? Study the life of Jesus in the four Gospels. John wrote, “The Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Although you and I do not see Him now with our natural eyes, yet through the testimony of John and his fellow apostles we are enabled to see Jesus—to see the manifestation of eternal life. So John continued, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

Fellowship is a distinctly New Testament word. Not that you won't find the English word in our translation of the Old Testament, but there it has the thought of *companionship*. In Christianity fellowship is far more. When you hear the benediction pronounced, “The love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,” do you stop and think of what that means? People of different heredity, environment, and cultural standards, are saved by the same grace, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, and brought into marvelous fellowship one with another.

I remember a number of years ago sitting at a table eating with two Christian workers, one a colored man, the other a Japanese. Suddenly my Japanese friend said to us in his quiet oriental way, “What a wonderful thing is the grace of God! Just look at this, a black man, a yellow man, and a white man, all one in Christ Jesus! By nature each one filled with suspicion of the other, and even with a feeling of repugnance toward each

other, but by grace all one in Christ.” This is not something artificially pumped up or produced by any effort of your own. It is the effect of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

The Christian’s object of fellowship is occupation with Christ. The apostle John said, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” I like that—*our fellowship*. In 1 Corinthians 1:9 we read, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.” Men try to start fellowships, but they are poor things at best. The only fellowship I know anything about is the fellowship of God’s dear Son. Men may create their own fellowships, but thank God every believer has been called into the fellowship of God’s Son.

Years ago I was telling a brother about a certain missionary. The man to whom I was speaking happened to be part of a particular group of Christians with whom I am intimately associated. He looked rather bored while I was speaking with him, and when I had finished he said, “And is the brother in our fellowship?” “If you mean some little clique of Christians, no, I don’t think he is in our fellowship. But if you mean the fellowship of the Son of God, yes, he is in our fellowship.” Our fellowship is the fellowship of the body of Christ as demonstrated in the communion. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” What a marvelous fellowship this is!

Do you want to know how to get into this fellowship? There is only one way—through a second birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be born again. The Spirit will come to dwell in you and bring you into “our fellowship.” Fellowship means common thoughts and

interests. Have you learned to know a Savior's love? Do you enjoy the precious things that the apostle John is talking about? Has the glorious truth of eternal life as revealed in the Son of God become a reality to you? Then we can share it together. As I tell you a little about Christ and you tell me a little of what you know, our hearts are warmed. That is real fellowship.

John concluded this section with these words, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." You have a measure of joy now, but you will have more as you get better acquainted with Christ. You have a measure of happiness now; you will have more as you get to know Him more intimately.

The Christian Message (1 John 1:5-10)

In this section John briefly gives us the Christian message—a synopsis of the gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to carry into all the world. This gospel, if believed fills the heart with joy. What is the message? "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1:5). They had heard the message from His own lips while He was on earth. You may say, "I don't see anything about these verses that is particularly encouraging or that would fill my soul with joy." If you are going on to know fullness of joy, you must first of all be brought into the presence of God as He is; and God is light.

There are two expressions used in this book that tell us the nature of God. Here we read that God is *light*, and in chapter 4 we read that God is *love*. Light is used throughout Scripture as a synonym for infinite holiness, purity, and perfect

righteousness. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” There is nothing in God but absolute purity, absolute perfection, absolute holiness. You say, “Well, how then can I, a guilty sinner, ever have fellowship with an infinitely holy God? I might as well give up now, for if ‘God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,’ if He can discern every secret thought of my heart, if He sees every evil way in me, how can I ever have fellowship with Him?” He has provided the way, but He first wants me to recognize that if I ever have fellowship with Him, it must be *in the light*.

John went on to say, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1:6). There is no use talking about having fellowship with God and living in sin. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). To walk in darkness is to walk in sin. To walk in sin is to follow the dictates of our own natural minds and hearts. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:18). This is the description of the nature of all men. The unsaved man belongs to the darkness. He is in Satan’s kingdom of darkness; he walks in it and loves it. Scripture says, “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). If you are doing something shameful, corrupt, or vile, you don’t want to do it in the full light of day. You look for some hidden place either alone or with someone like yourself. You cannot have fellowship with God in darkness, for God is light.

We have darkness presented in four different ways in Scripture. There is the natural darkness, “having the understanding darkened” (Ephesians 4:18). This darkness is natural to all men. No man by nature understands God. No man naturally loves holiness and purity. Have you ever noticed that you do not have to teach little children to tell lies? You do have to teach them to tell the truth. You never have to teach them to lose their temper, but you do have to teach them to control it. You never have to teach them to be disobedient, but you do have to teach them to be obedient. Why is this? Because people naturally are children of darkness. As we look into the faces of babies we do not like to think that in their little hearts there are the same sinful tendencies we find in ourselves. Nevertheless sin is present, and so there is the necessity of regeneration. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

Someone might say, “I am not responsible for my sin because I was born a sinner and my understanding was darkened. God is responsible for permitting me to come into the world like this.” God accepts full responsibility, and is not going to send anyone to eternal judgment because he was born a sinner. He is not going to send anyone to everlasting ruin because he was born in darkness. God has come to men and offered them a way out. That way is in the gospel.

In the second place, we have willful darkness. Our Lord Jesus said, “This is the condemnation [not that men were born sinners], that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”

(John 3:21). Everyone who does evil hates the light. Men are therefore responsible when they reject the light that comes to them. That is the condemnation. That is willful darkness.

The solemn result of willful darkness is judicial darkness. In Jeremiah 13:16 we read, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” Does a God who is light sometimes cause darkness? Yes, if men deliberately reject and turn their backs on the light. Pharaoh rejected the light. He hardened himself against God, and God hardened him in his sins. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 we read of those who “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” My friend, if God has given you a measure of light, thank Him for it. Seek grace to go on in that light. Don’t turn away from it, lest you go into judicial darkness.

In Jude we read of the final result of rejecting the light, “To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13). If you lean towards universalism and believe the dream of the final restoration of all men to God, how do you account for this verse? There are certain men for whom is “reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” God does not want any man to live in the dark or die in the dark. He wants men to come into the light, and in order that they may do so He has come to them. When Christ died, the veil that once separated God and man was torn in two from top to bottom. Now the true light is shining, and “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we

have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1:7).

Long ago God’s glory was veiled in the thick darkness. Man tried in vain to find and comprehend Him. But now God is “in the light”; He has been fully manifested. He is no longer hidden. He has been perfectly revealed in Christ, and the torn veil permits His glory to shine forth.

Notice that the cleansing of the blood depends on our walking in the light. What is the apostle telling us? For many years I was very confused about this. I thought it said, “If we walk *according* to the light, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” I thought it meant that if I was very careful about obeying every command of God, that if I walked according to all the light I might have, He would cleanse me. But we find that the worst sinner may have this cleansing. When does he get it? When he turns away from the darkness and comes to the light. Notice, it does not say if we walk *according* to the light, but it says, “If we walk *in* the light.” It is *where* you walk, not *how* you walk—it is to walk in the presence of God. By nature we do not want to come into the presence of God. But when the Holy Spirit has done His convicting work in our souls, we cannot stay away any longer. When we run toward the light, making our way into the very presence of the One we have been dreading, we find the light is shining from the blood-sprinkled mercy seat.

Remember the picture in the tabernacle. In the holiest of all there was the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the cherubim overshadowing it. They are mentioned in the Psalms as portraying divine justice and judgment. As a poor sinner, justice and judgment are waiting, as it were, to bring divine

wrath on my guilty soul. But here the divine justice and judgment are seen above the mercy seat. What makes the throne of God a mercy seat? It is the sprinkled blood, the blood of sacrifice. And so divine justice and judgment are gazing down on the blood, and it is from this very place that the light shines. Between the cherubim is an uncreated light, the shekinah glory. I used to shrink from the light, loving my sin and the darkness. Now led on by the Spirit of God, I come to the light, face it, and let it shine full on me. What does it reveal? It reveals my sin and my iniquity. But I am not alone there, for “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1:7). I find that I am simply one of a great group of people who are all just as bad as I am by nature. Many people have the idea that they could never be happy coming into the presence of God until they first become saints. But the first time you come into His presence, you must come with all your sins, either in this life or in the day of judgment. If you come into His presence with your sins on you in the day of judgment, it means that you will be lost forever. But if you bring your sins before Him in this life, then you will find that though the light exposes all your corruption, iniquity, and wickedness, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” We do not need to fear the light, for the blood is in the very place from which the light comes. Let me emphasize again, It is not *how* we walk, it is *where* we walk. Do you walk in the light; have you come into the presence of God; have you ever had that light shine upon you?

The word *cleanseth* suggests to many a continual cleansing. I do not think that is the thought of Scripture. The marvelous thing about salvation is that when you put your trust in the Lord Jesus, the blood of Christ cleanses eternally and

completely in the sight of God. The blood abides on the mercy seat; it is there constantly before God in its eternal power. There is never a moment that the blood is not there before God. I may fail in words, actions, and thoughts that grieve the Spirit of God, but the blood abides and it cleanseth from all sin.

When it comes to practical cleansing we have the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). God's estimate of the sacrificial work of His Son will never change, and therefore my standing before God will never change.

Once in Him, in Him forever,
Thus God's faithful record stands.

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This verse could be translated, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from every sin." It cleanses from the guilt of sin. The moment I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the blood cleanses from it all. I once thought of this as a kind of inward experience. I considered myself a Christian with a sinful nature, and that little by little it would be cleansed. But the marvelous fact is that in contrast to all my guilt is the infinite value of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not see one sin resting on the soul that trusts that precious blood.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1:8). Suppose someone says, "I have no need of this cleansing blood; I am good enough as I am I am not a sinner; I do not need forgiveness." One of our poets has said, "I need no Christ to die for me," and he is not the only one who takes that position today. Very well, the apostle said, "If we say

we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” Notice, we do not deceive anyone but ourselves. You never saw a man that could deceive his wife by saying he had no sin. He might have been able to deceive her before they were married, but she soon begins to see his flaws and cannot be deceived. We do not deceive those closest to us; the only person we deceive is ourselves. The Word goes on to tell us that “the truth is not in us.”

I remember years ago when Henry Varley was having some meetings in Oakland, California and spoke on this verse. He said, “I have been told that you have a good many sinless people out here in California. I have never seen one such person myself, and I have a real curiosity to see one. If there is one here tonight, I would like to see him as soon as the meeting is over.” After the meeting, one man came up to the preacher and said, “I understand you want to see a perfectly sinless man. I have never sinned in twenty-two years, since I was wholly sanctified.” “Well now, my dear brother,” said Mr. Varley, “let me get this right. You recognize, of course, that there are sins of omission as well as of commission?” “Yes,” he said. “And you are telling me that you have never been guilty either of sins of commission or of omission for twenty-two years?” the preacher asked. The man started to justify himself when an old lady came up the aisle, and before he could say a word, she said, “Yes, there are some folks that say they never commit sins, but ask their neighbors. They can tell a different story.” The man left without a word. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” That is why we need the cleansing value of the precious blood of Christ.

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I can no more stand before God on the grounds of my own spiritual experience than I could as a sinner. I stand before Him on the grounds of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Can we go on then living in sin? No, not at all. Cleansing by the blood is our judicial cleansing. But “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). This is our practical cleansing. You see, I come to God not only wanting my sins put away from before Him, my evil record omitted from the books of eternity, but also wanting practical deliverance by His power. I want to know what it is to have actual cleansing in my life in word, thought, and deed. I must come to God as a penitent, for it does not say that if we pray our sins will be forgiven, but, “If we confess our sins.” Of course, as a sinner, when I come to Christ I come on the grounds of this verse, and He cleanses me. But as a believer confessing the failures in my life, I come confessing my sin, and He is “faithful and just to forgive.”

In the Old Testament a person was to come to God with an offering and “confess that he hath sinned in *that thing*” (Leviticus 5:5). This implies definiteness in confession. I’m afraid many of us never really get to God in confession because we are so indefinite. Someone may pray and say, “If You have seen any sin, anything wrong in me, forgive me.” Hold on a minute! Is there any sin; do you know of anything wrong? The proper way to make confession is to come to God acknowledging the wrong I have done. A lady who came to Charles Wesley said, “I want you to pray with me, for I am a great sinner. I am a saint of God, but I fail so dreadfully, and I want you to pray with me.” Mr. Wesley said rather sternly, “I

will pray for you, for indeed you need it. You are a great sinner.” “What do you mean?” she asked indignantly; “I have never done anything terribly bad!” Oh, dear friends, if you want blessing, do not be vague in your confession. Go into the presence of God and tell Him all about your sins. Tell Him about your bad temper, about your scandalous tongue, about all the things you do to grieve His Holy Spirit. Some of you say, “Pray for my husband, I would like him to be converted.” He is more likely to be converted if you will say, “O God, I confess that my bad temper is hindering my husband from being saved and is alienating my children. I am not surprised that my friends are not converted.” Then go to them and make confession to them. If you have been saying it was nervousness when it was really bad temper, confess that it is temper, and stop trying to excuse your sin.

He will cleanse us by the washing of the Word and give victory in our lives. He will enable us to live here to His praise and glory. “If we say we have not sinned [if we dare to take the ground that we have never sinned] we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1:10). We have not yet come into the light, but are still in the darkness trying to cover up our sins. May God enable us to be real with Him and with one another. Then we will know the blessing of fellowship in the light.

1 John, Chapter 2: Living in God's Light

Christ Our Advocate (1 John 2:1-2)

These two verses constitute the second part of the message we were studying in Chapter One. Remember in verse 5 of 1 John 1 we read, “This then is the message,” and then in the rest of that chapter, including the first two verses of the second chapter, we have the message in its entirety. This is the message that John and the other apostles were commissioned by Christ to carry throughout the world. It is the message of man’s utterly lost condition in darkness, and of the atoning value of the precious blood of Christ. This message tells us the importance of facing our sins in the presence of God, and finding forgiveness. Now John goes on to address the failures of believers, those who have been cleansed judicially from all sin. What about our failures?—for you know we do fail, all of us, much as we may regret the sad fact.

I remember one summer I was rather amused listening to a sermon in which the speaker was telling about a little girl who had been left by her parents with another family while they were away. When at last the mother and father returned for her and she was on her way home, she said to her father, “Daddy, there were four little boys at that house where I have been staying.”

“Yes, I knew that,” he said.

“Daddy, they have family worship there every night.”

“I’m glad to hear that.”

“Daddy, every night their father prays for those four little boys.”

“That is very nice.”

“He prays, Daddy, that God will make them good boys, and that they won’t do anything naughty,” said the little girl.

“That is very nice.”

She was silent a moment and then said, “But Daddy, He hasn’t done it yet.”

There are a great many folk like that. We are praying that God will make us good, and holy, and that our lives may be lives of victory. But I’m afraid many of us have to confess that God hasn’t done it yet. We recognize the fact that we do sin, and we do fail. Our hearts are nearly broken by our failures. What about the sins of believers?

First of all, believers should not sin. John tells us, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1). The word translated “little children” could better be translated “children” or “dear children” because the original word does not refer to age or size. It is a word that takes in everyone who is born of God. It literally means “born ones,” those who are born into God’s family. “My children, these things write I unto you, that ye should not be sinning.” It is the desire, the will of God for His children that we should not sin. God has redeemed us to Himself not only to take us to Heaven, but that we should live to the praise of His glory in this world.

Farther on we read, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (3:9). In other words, they do not *live in the practice of sin*. When an individual is saved, a change takes place. If there is no change in a person’s life, they have never

been born of God. From the time of their new birth they hate sin and love holiness. If they do not hate sin and love holiness, they are not born of God. On the other hand, I recognize the fact that “there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). There is no one who does not fail. It is not that God is powerless to deliver us, but we fail to steadfastly keep our eyes fixed on Christ—to reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).

The moment a believer becomes self-occupied, undisciplined, and negligent in prayer, he sins. Remember that sin consists not only in doing overt evil acts, but also in not doing the good that you know you should. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

I frequently meet people who say they never sin. I ask them, “Just what do you mean by that? Do you mean that you never break any of the ten commandments?” “Yes,” they say. “Do you mean that you never commit any actual overt acts of iniquity?” “Yes.” “Do you also mean that you do everything that you know you could do for God, that you take advantage of every opportunity of doing good, of every opportunity of speaking for Christ, of every opportunity of glorifying your Lord and Savior?” If there is the least bit of honesty, they bow their head and say, “No, I am afraid that I do not.” Then you sin. Sin is not merely the violation of certain moral principles, it is also failure to do the good that you know you should do.

“If any man sin”—here the word *sin* is in the Greek aorist—it means, “If any man commit a sin at a given point of time.” It is not a question of the practice of sin, but of a definite failure. “If any man sin,” what then? Some believe that sin immediately

severs the link that binds the believer to Christ. If that were true, no one would ever have the assurance of being a Christian. But there are two links that bind us to Christ. First there is the link of union. That link is so strong that the weight of the world could not break it. Our blessed Lord Himself said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall *never* perish” (John 10:27-28, italics added). Nothing can ever break our link with Christ once it has been formed by the Spirit of God.

But there is another link that binds the believer to the Lord, and that is the link of communion. This link is so delicate, it is easily broken. One unholy thought will snap it. One unchristlike action will destroy it. One minute given to foolishness will break it, and that link could never be formed again if it depended entirely on us. We often speak of the finished work of Christ, and rightly so. Our blessed Lord as He hung on the cross cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30). He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit, and there the work that saves our guilty souls was completed. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14). The finished work of Christ stands alone in absolute perfection. Our souls can rest on that finished work.

As a believer was dying, someone leaned over him and asked, “Is everything all right?” The man replied, “It is finished”; on that I can rest my eternity.”

Upon a life I did not live,

Upon a death I did not die,

Another's life, Another's death,

I stake my whole eternity.

It is finished, yes, indeed;

Finished, every jot!

Sinner, this is all you need!

Tell me, is it not?

Nothing can be added to a finished work. While it is perfectly Scriptural to speak of the finished work of Christ, it is just as Scriptural to speak of the unfinished work of Christ. Our blessed Lord who completed one work when He died for our sins, began another when He ascended to the Father's right hand in Heaven. There in the glory "he ever liveth to make intercession for [us]" (Hebrews 7:25). That intercessory work has two aspects. We read in Hebrews that He is there as our High Priest with God. As High Priest He is able to give us a perfect representation before God. We are seen in Him, and He is there to minister grace in our time of need. As a High Priest He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities", and sympathizes with us in all our weakness. His sympathy has nothing to do with our sins, but with our infirmities—our weaknesses. If we avail ourselves of His high priestly work, we will not fall into sin. We can go to Him—our great High Priest—to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Scripture not only presents Christ as our High Priest, but also as our Advocate. It is as our Advocate that He confronts the believer's sins. He is said to be a High Priest with God, but He is our Advocate with the Father. The more I read the Bible the more I realize the *exactness* of Scripture. The more I hear

people talk about the Bible, the more I am impressed with how *inexact* we are when talking about divine things. It is quite natural for us to talk about Christ as the High Priest with the Father, or the Advocate with God, but that would dilute the truth of Scripture. My sins are put away by the blood of Christ, and I have a perfect representation before the throne of God in my great High Priest. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

When I was converted, God became my Father. There is no such thing in the Bible as the universal Fatherhood of God. He is Father only to those who are born again. As a believer if I fail or fall into sin, I read, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with *the Father*” (1 John 2:1). Not an Advocate with God, but with the Father. Why with the *Father*? Because the Spirit of God teaches me that our relationship has not been disturbed! When you sin, the devil says, “Now you’ve done it; you were a Christian before, but not any more. God is no longer your Father.” This is just a lie of the devil, for it is written, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with *the Father*” Our relationship is undisturbed.

In the original the word *paraclete* (translated “advocate” in 1 John 2:1) means “one who comes to your side to help.” This same word is translated “Comforter” in John 14:16,26; 15:26 and 16:7. In the Gospel Jesus spoke of the “Comforter” that the Father will send in His name. The Comforter—the Spirit of God—comes from the Father and is sent both by the Father and the Son. The Lord said in effect, “I am going away, but I will send the Paraclete—One who will come to your side to help in every time of need.” On the other hand, in 1 John 2:1 we read that we

have a Paraclete or “advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” In other words, God sent the Holy Spirit down to earth to dwell in me, to be my Advocate here on earth—to look after God’s interests in me. Then He took the blessed Lord up to Heaven to be my Advocate with the Father—to look after my interests with the Father.

Why do I need an Advocate in Heaven? Because I have a great adversary. An advocate is someone who goes into court to represent you and to plead your case. You cannot defend yourself, but, when you go to your advocate, he defends you and pleads your case against your adversary. Satan is called in Revelation 12:10, the “accuser of [the] brethren...which accused them before our God day and night.” When you sin, the devil appoints himself the prosecuting attorney in the high court of Heaven. The devil goes right into the presence of God and says, “Is this one of your Christians? Listen to what he is saying now; see what he is doing!” He is there to accuse, but the blessed Lord is there. He shows His wounds and spreads His hands, and says to the Father, “I took all that into account when I died on Calvary’s tree.”

I hear the accuser roar

Of ills that I have done;

I know them well, and thousands more,

Jehovah findeth none.

Though the restless foe accuses—

Sins recounting like a flood,

Every charge our God refuses;

Christ has answered with His blood.

I realize my unrighteousness when I fall into sin, and could easily give up in despair. But I have an Advocate in the presence of the Father who gives me a perfect representation. God sees me in Him. I do not plead my case on the basis of my own righteousness but on the absolute righteousness of Christ Jesus. And so I can plead with power; I can plead effectively, because Christ died for the very sin that is now troubling me. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2).

This word, *propitiation*, as used in John’s Epistle is a different word from the one used in Romans. Propitiation in Romans means the mercy seat. Romans 3:25 reads, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” The reference is to the mercy seat—the meeting place between God and man. But in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, *propitiation* means an “atonement” or an “expiation.” My failures cannot undo the work of the cross. Christ has died, been raised, and gone up to God’s right hand, and is there as my Advocate interceding for me. There He undertakes my case. He Himself is the propitiation.

First John 2:1 does not say, “If any man repent, we have an advocate; if any man confess his sins, we have an advocate; if any man weep over his sins, we have an advocate.” Instead it says, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” It is not just when I am repentant that I have an Advocate, but the very moment I fail, Christ takes up my case, even before I am sorry about it. The moment that unkind word left my lips, the moment I did that spiteful thing, the moment I was thoughtless in some business matter, that very moment before

my conscience was exercised and I was troubled, the devil was in the presence of God to accuse me. But the same instant the Son of God was there to represent me. As a result of His advocacy, the Spirit takes the Word of God and applies it to my conscience, and I confess my sin. It is possible that my conscience was not troubled until some time after my failure. Perhaps I did not realize the true condition of my heart until the night I could not pray, and I said to myself, "What is the matter?" Then I cried, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psalm 139:23). In answer to the advocacy of my blessed Lord, the Spirit of God says, "Don't you remember that unkind word, that unholy thought, that spiteful thing you did, that unforgiving spirit, that selfishness, that worldliness?" The guilt overwhelms me, and I break before God and say, "O God, I cannot go to sleep tonight until I have told You all about it." Then I tell my story, confess my failures, my weakness and my sins, and as I do so, I know the blessing of the promise, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). You see the wonderful truth is that all the experiences I have gone through have not touched my relationship in the family of God.

My wife and I have raised two boys. Like other boys they are usually very good, but sometimes they give us a great deal of trouble. There are times they have given us a great deal of comfort, and then there are times when they have not been everything they should be, and it has concerned us. Often we have had to discipline them and say, "Go up to your room and stay there until you can face this thing, until you are ready to acknowledge your wrong and ask for forgiveness." Sometimes the child's will sets itself against the will of the parents. Hour

after hour goes by without acknowledgment of wrong. Then suppertime comes and as the child hears the rattling of dishes, he calls out, "Father!" I go upstairs and he asks, "Can I go down to supper?" "That depends on you. Confess your wrong and you may come down." "Well," he says, "if you think I have done anything wrong, I am sorry." "No, that won't do," and so I leave him and go back downstairs. Soon the meal is served and the odor wafts upstairs. He is getting hungry, and so he calls again. I go upstairs, and he tries to avoid the issue by saying, "Since you and Mother both think what I did is wrong, I guess it is, and I am sorry." "No, guessing will not do," and I turn to go downstairs. Maybe halfway down the stairs I hear him cry, "Father, Father, Please forgive me. I have been very naughty and stubborn." Oh, how glad I am to throw my arms around him and put the kiss of forgiveness on his forehead, and say, "Come on down; we will all enjoy dinner better with you there."

So it is with our God and Father. Sin does not touch our relationship, but it does hurt our fellowship. But our blessed Lord is in the presence of God the Father to plead for His people, and as a result of His advocacy, we are brought to repentance and confession, and He graciously restores our fellowship.

Obedience, the Proof of the New Life (1 John 2:3-11)

The apostle now presents to us some tests of our Christian profession. It is one thing to say, "I am a Christian," but it is another to possess eternal life. It is one thing to say, "I am a child of God," and quite another to know the marvelous blessing of regeneration. Do we say we are Christians? Do we

claim to be children of God? Then we must prove it by our lives.

“We do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (2:3). He is not speaking from a legal standpoint. In the Old Testament the commandments of God were presented to us with a view of obtaining life. The law said of the man who kept His commandments, “Which, if a man do, he shall live in them” (Leviticus 18:5). But here, under grace, it is the opposite. The man who lives by faith will do His commandments. The one who says he lives for God and yet is completely indifferent to the will of God, has never been born of God. He is still in “the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:23). The child of God delights in obedience to the will of God. Not that his obedience is perfect, for it is never that. There is only One who could say, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). But love for the will of God springs up in the soul of the man who is truly regenerated. He delights to walk in obedience to God’s Word, and thus he proves that he is a child of God. He not only rests on the Word that says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” but he finds within himself that which corroborates his faith—that which proves he has been born of God. This new desire to do the will of God is not of the natural man. By nature we prefer to do our own will, we prefer to take our own way. But in trusting Christ, we learn to delight in His divine will.

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). How outspoken the apostle John was! Some people do not appreciate this kind of strong language. But we need to realize that the apostle was dealing with great abstract truths. Men

either love God or do not. They either walk in darkness or they walk in light. There is no in between. The principle here is that we can test ourselves to see where we are. We should ask, “Do I delight in the will of God; do I love His commandments?” If I do not, there is no use professing to be a Christian, for I am professing a lie. It is hypocrisy to claim to be a Christian while my works deny my profession.

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (2:4-5). There is a difference between keeping God’s word and keeping His commandments. Of course, a little farther down we are told that the “commandment is the word” (2:7), but we could hardly say the word is the commandment. The commandment is included in the word, but the word is more than the commandment. The word is the expression of the will of God, either given in direct commandment or otherwise, and we who are saved delight to keep His word. This is the commendation that the Lord gave the church in Philadelphia, thou “hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Revelation 3:8). The Lord Himself makes this distinction between keeping His commandment and keeping His word. In John 14:15 He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” but farther on He adds, “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (John 14:23).

The following story illustrates the difference between “commandment” and “word”. There is a little girl who after school enjoys playing with her friends. One day her mother said, “My dear, when you come home from school today, there

are some chores I want you to do. Dust the living room and set the table for supper. I will be out for a while, but when you are finished you can go out and play.” Because she is an obedient child, when she returned from school she did the things her mother had commanded her to do. She showed her love in this way.

On another occasion she was under no such command, but coming home heard her mother speaking to the next door neighbor. Her mother said, “You know, I really don’t know how I am going to get through this afternoon. I have invited company for dinner, and I am in a panic because I don’t have anything ready. I am so exhausted and yet there are potatoes to peel, vegetables to prepare, and I don’t know how I will get it all done.” Now in the morning the mother had told her daughter, “When you come home from school today you can go out and play until I call you for dinner.” But the little girl, after hearing this conversation between her mother and the neighbor said, “Mother, you go and lie down for an hour. I will peel the potatoes, prepare the vegetables, set the table, and help you get dinner ready.” “But I told you you could play today,” the mother answered. “Oh, but I wouldn’t be happy out playing knowing you were here at home feeling so badly,” the child replied. Yesterday the little girl kept her mother’s commands; today she is keeping her word. How it must have delighted the mother’s heart to have her daughter doing these things even when she was not commanded to do them!

The believer, in studying the Word of God, finds direct commands—certain things the Lord has told him to do, and because he loves his Lord, it is his delight to keep those commandments. But as he continues to read, he comes across

passages containing no command whatever, but that express God's desires—the longings of His heart for His own people. The true believer says, “Because You have won my heart, dear Savior, I will keep Your words.” “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:5). The word is the revelation of what God is and of His dwelling in the believer. Therefore keeping His word is the demonstration of the life of Christ in the one whom He has redeemed.

So the apostle added, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (2:6). I cannot be all that Jesus is; that is impossible. Jesus is the Holy One of God, and I, although regenerated, am still a poor, failing, sinful man. But I am called to walk as He walked, for Christ has left us “an example that [we] should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). I am to glorify Him by following in His footsteps.

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:7). Earlier we examined the expression, “From the beginning,” and saw that it differs from the words in Genesis 1:1, which speak of the beginning of creation. When John said, “I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning” (2:7), he was not referring to something strange and new, but was referring back to the word spoken by the Lord when He was here on earth. He was referring to the beginning of the Christian dispensation.

False teachers had come into the church and were deceiving the people of God with their teachings. The apostle said to test

these teachings by asking, were these things taught from the beginning? As we have already seen, in Christianity, “What is new is not true, and what is true is not new.” We are not in the process of discovering Christianity. Christianity was a revelation committed to godly men by the Holy Spirit in the very beginning of the church age. In other words John said, “Go back to the records of our Lord’s life, see what He Himself taught, and walk in obedience to His Word.” Our Lord was not merely summing up the commandments when He said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another” (John 13:34), but it was His instruction concerning obedience to the will of God.

But now the commandment takes on a new character. Since Christ has died, risen from the dead, ascended to Heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of believers, there are millions of regenerated men and women. To them the apostle declared, “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2:8). The commandment is the word of God, and the word was expressed in the life of Christ. If we are born again, the life of Christ has been given to us, so what is true in Him is true in us. The only thing Jesus could do when He was here on earth was the will of God. He had no other thought or desire. Now He dwells in us, and if we are Christians, we have His life in us. When John speaks of His commandment, he says it is new because divine life is ours, and so the word is both in Him and in us. By calling on the believer to do the will of God, our Lord is asking him to do the very thing he longs to do.

Suppose a mother calls the doctor to see her young child. The little one seems to be very ill. After a careful examination, the doctor says, "I'm afraid the baby is very sick. I'm going to leave you some medicine. Don't neglect the child, or be indifferent to its needs. Watch it carefully, see that it gets the medicine regularly, and is protected from anything that might make it worse instead of better. Please take good care of this child!" Is he asking the mother to do something that is difficult? No. She would probably reply, "That is exactly what I want and intend to do. I love that little child and nothing would cause me to be careless with it. I want to do the very best that I can for it." The mother is told to do the very thing her heart yearns to do. And so it is with the believer, "You, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (Colossians 1:21), now love to do the things He asks. We delight in the will of God.

"A new commandment I write unto you...because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8). The word *past* does not exactly suggest the tense of the original. What he was really saying is, "The darkness is *passing*, and the true light is now shining." We can see as we look on the world around us and in us that the darkness is *not past*. Even though the gospel of the grace of God has been preached for almost two thousand years, the darkness is not gone. There are still millions in darkness and in the shadow of death. And no matter how well I know my Lord and His Word, I cannot say that the darkness is past even in me. But the darkness is *passing*, and the true light is shining. Every day I am getting to know my Lord better, and every day I understand His will more perfectly. But until the time comes when I leave this

body and see my blessed Savior face to face, there will still be a measure of darkness in me, even though all is light in Him.

Schiller, the German poet, said as he was dying, “I see everything clearer and clearer.” It won’t be long until all the darkness will be gone, and we will see everything in all its clearness in His own blessed presence.

In verses 9 and 10 the apostle speaks very seriously and very solemnly concerning something that may well convict some of us. “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now” (2:9). If you hate your brother, no matter what you profess, you are still in darkness. Notice he did not say you may be a real Christian who has fallen into darkness; but he said, if you hate your brother you are “in darkness *even until now*.” You have never been anywhere else. You have never been in the light at all. You cannot have divine light or the Holy Spirit or the love of God dwelling in you, and still hate your brother. And yet we often see people professing the name of Christ while showing hatred toward others.

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him” (2:10). With new life comes light and love. God is light and love, and as we walk in fellowship with Him, nothing will cause us to stumble. Instead, we will constantly demonstrate the love of Christ. There is no room for hatred in the heart that is filled with the love of God.

“He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (2:11). This is the natural darkness in which all men are born. “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their

heart” (Ephesians 4:18). That is the condition of man by nature. But remember, we are not condemned because of what we are by nature. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). You are not responsible because you are a sinner by nature, but you *are* responsible if you reject the Savior. You are not responsible because you were born in darkness and your understanding is darkened, but you are responsible if you reject the light that comes to you through the Word of God. This light will chase away all the darkness if you walk in it. Don’t turn from its searching rays.

But if men persist in rejecting the light, there may come a day when God will withdraw that light. In Jeremiah 13:16 we read, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” This is the “strong delusion” we read about in 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Then there is only one more step—eternal darkness—“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13). “He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:11). But Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Have you honestly trusted Him? Is He your light? Is He your life today?

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

*“I am this dark world’s Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,*

| And all thy days be bright.”

I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun,
And in that light of life, I'll walk
Till trav'ling days are done.

Horatius Bonar

The Children of God (1 John 2:12-13)

These verses introduce a distinct section of John's Epistle in which he has a word of exhortation for all God's children. Whatever their years of Christian life or their experience, all are addressed in verse 12 when he said, "I write unto you, [dear] children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." I purposely omitted the word *little*, which is in the King James version and substituted the word *dear*. I did this because the word translated "little children" in verse 12 is a very different Greek word from the one translated "little children" in verse 13. The first word takes in all those who are bom into the family of God. It is a term of endearment. But the second word refers just to those who are young. In verse 12, John is addressing all who have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—those who have been bom into the great family of God. They are all God's beloved children. If you have made Christ your only ground of confidence, and are now able to say, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, / All other ground is sinking sand," then you are numbered among the children of verse 12. "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." He has given us in 1 John 1:7 the basis of that forgiveness:

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” There is no other way that sin can be blotted out. No other way that guilty men can be given a standing in the presence of a holy God. No other way is needed, for on Calvary’s tree our Lord shed His precious atoning blood. Thank God that “Sinners plunged beneath that flood, / Lose all their guilty stains.” These are the children of God.

All men are by nature the children of Adam. They are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them” (Ephesians 4:18), and, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Those who have trusted the Lord Jesus and believed the gospel are already born into His family. Peter said, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever...And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23, 25). But now, although all believers are equal as the redeemed of the Lord, and all who have trusted Christ are in one family as the children of God, yet there are obviously differing degrees of spirituality—degrees of progress in the Christian life. So in verse 13, the apostle divides the children of God into three classes according to the measure of their growth “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:18).

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13). John was not referring here to age or sex. He was not writing just to the men in Christ and excluding the women. These three terms, *fathers*, *young men*, and *children*, are used to distinguish

believers according to the measure of their growth in grace. Who are fathers? They are those who for years have known the Lord, walked with God, and grown old in the things of Christ. To them John said, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." It is quite possible to have been a Christian for many years, and yet not be a *father*. There are many who have been saved a great many years but are spiritually dwarfed because they give so little attention to spiritual things. They give so little time to the Word of God, are so seldom exercised in holy things, and know so little of the blessedness of prayer and communion with the Lord, that they do not grow. But when the apostle spoke to the fathers, he was speaking to those who through long years have availed themselves of their Christian privileges, learned to love the Word of God, sought to walk with Christ, labored for the blessing of others, and learned experientially to know the blessed Lord in all His fullness. When John said, "Ye have known him [that is] from the beginning," he did not mean, "Ye have known concerning him," or "known about him," but "ye have known *him*." Spiritual fathers have lived in fellowship with Him, walked with Him, and talked with Him. He has become dearer and nearer and more real to them than any earthly friend. He draws very near to His own, and, if I may coin an expression, He *presences* Himself with them. He shows them His hands and feet, and says, "It is I myself: handle me, and see" (Luke 24:39). He asks us to remember that it was for us He bore the wounds and endured the agony of the cross, in order that we might become His own. So the fathers are those who have learned to know Him throughout the years. They have learned to appreciate His love. The world has lost its power

over their souls because Christ has filled the eyes of their hearts.

Next John wrote to the “young men.” These are the strong Christians who, although they may not have walked with God for as many years as the fathers, have yet gone on with Him into spiritual maturity. They have learned the secret of overcoming. In the book of Revelation we read, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11). When John said, “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one,” we can be sure that it is through their faith in the atoning blood of Christ that they have been able to turn away from the world that crucified Him. They have said farewell to anything that has no place for their Lord.

My old companions, fare you well,

I cannot go with you to hell;

I mean with Jesus Christ to dwell

I will go.

Do you remember an experience like that? Have you turned from the world that rejected your Savior, and clinging to Him, taken His place of rejection? If so, then even when Satan seeks to terrify you by bringing before you your past sins, you are able to plead the infinite value of Christ’s atoning blood. That is the way to overcome.

Finally, there is a third class into which the apostle divides the family of God. These are the little ones, new believers in Christ, and to them he says, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” A little while ago they were walking with the world in darkness, but they heard the

gracious invitation of the loving Savior, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Responding to His invitation, they came with all their sins and grief, and found how true a friend Jesus is to those who trust Him. Now, though they do not know much else, they know the Father and have been given the Holy Spirit.

God does not wait until we become mature Christians before the Holy Spirit is given to us. “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3) We began in the Spirit. We received the Spirit of God as soon as we believed in Jesus, and He teaches us to cry, “Abba Father.” We look up into His blessed face and are able to say, “My Father.” There is a great deal for the “little children” to learn. Many varied experiences are still ahead of them, and there are wonderful truths yet to be opened. But they are just as accepted in the Beloved as the fathers. They are just as cleansed from every sin as the young men who “have overcome the wicked one.”

How to Overcome (1 John 2:14-17)

Beginning with verse 14 John goes on to give a word of encouragement, warning, and exhortation, to each group of believers, so he mentions them all again in order. To the fathers he says, “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning” (2:14). John does not add anything to what he said in verse 13. It is exactly the same. Why doesn’t he add anything? Because you cannot add to the climax of Christian experience—“Ye have known him that is from the beginning.” “From the beginning,” refers to Jesus’ incarnation here on earth. It must have been wonderful to trace His footsteps as He walked the sands of earth, and see

Him in His perfection—God revealed in the flesh. It is even more wonderful to know Him now as the One who passed through death, was raised by the glory of the Father, has ascended to Heaven, and sits exalted at God's right hand as our great High Priest and Advocate.

There are not many fathers in the faith. People may be very old in Christ and yet not *be fathers* in a spiritual sense. Sadly, many who have been Christians for years are still very worldly minded and know little of true fellowship with Christ. Paul earnestly prayed, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). It is this personal knowledge of God that constitutes one a father in Christ. This is the height of Christian maturity, and comes through a life of intimate fellowship with Christ.

Does your soul long to know Him? Do you seek to know Him better through the years? There is only one way that you will ever become a father in Christ—it is to *know* Him. Many people are quite clear regarding certain great doctrines, or convinced as to where they stand on the fundamental and liberal controversy. They have rigid ideas as to how the people of God should meet together, and yet there is one thing very evident—they do not know Christ in this intimate relationship that is indicated here.

How do you get to know a person? By living with them day after day. How do you get to know Christ? By living in intimate fellowship with Him day after day throughout the years. You know Him when He ministers to you in your sorrow. You know Him when you put Christ first and find your chief joy and gladness in Him. To *know* Him! This is to be a father in Christ.

John does not add a word of exhortation. Why? Because when Christ becomes the sole object of the heart, nothing more can be added to that. The heart completely devoted to Christ is delivered from the power of sin, saved from worldliness, and kept from jealousy, envy, and everything that is of the flesh. These things will not be present in the heart where Christ is all in all.

Next the apostle turned his attention to those who have not reached the depths of experience that the fathers have, and yet are strong, vigorous Christians. He said, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). When he spoke to them previously, he simply said, “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one” (2:13). But now he reveals the secret of that overcoming. They are not strong in their own power, but “in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). In other words, you are strong because “the word of God abideth in you.” Many of us spend the greater part of the week occupied solely with the things of earth—things that in themselves are very right and legitimate. Once a week we come together for Bible study or worship, and say, “How encouraging and helpful!” It is like someone eating one good meal a week. That is not the way to be strong. We are strengthened by reading the Word of God first thing in the morning, meditating on the Word of God all day long, and studying the Word of God the last thing at night. If you go to bed with the Word of God in your mind, you will wake up with the Word of God in your mind. It is the Word of God that keeps us from the power of the enemy throughout the day. Some say, “I do not think this is possible.” But it is possible, and many

have proven it can be done. Someone said to me once concerning a fellow Christian, "I like your friend. He is like a walking Bible." That was because my friend was constantly feeding on the Word.

I knew a blacksmith who was so eager to become a man of God that he used to cut his Bible into sections, and tie one section up with a piece of string beside his forge. He would pull a page of it off and tack it up before him so that as he worked away at the blacksmith shop, he would be reading the Word. Was it any wonder that three years later God called that man away from the blacksmith shop into active Christian service? For forty years he has been an evangelist, leading many to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another man I knew was a printer. He had his Bible on a little stand in front of him, and as he worked away on those great circular presses, he had his heart set on the things of God. He would read a verse and meditate on it as he worked, and then read another, and another. It was not long until God took that man away from the printing press and sent him out preaching. He always said he got his theological seminary training standing at his printing press.

"Because the word of God abideth in you." You know there are many Christians who think of the Word of God as something to take up an extra hour or so when they have nothing else to do. But you will never grow that way. What little strength you get from that hour is all used up when you become occupied with other things. You do not get anywhere on small doses. When the Word of God is the supreme thing in your life, and everything else is made to fit into that, then you will grow and become a strong Christian.

The world is bidding for strong young Christians, and its allurements are all around them. The devil would do anything to trip up an earnest Christian. There are some believers the devil could care less about. But the ones who are out and out for God, Satan pursues with his snares and attractions, trying to trip them up. If they flee from one thing, he has another temptation waiting for them. And so the exhortation comes, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

What is this world that we are not to love? It is not the earth, for that in itself has nothing that can hurt our souls. We can love nature. We do not need to be afraid of a beautiful view or a lovely flower. Some Christians have the idea that we are not to enjoy the world of nature. I said to one, "Isn't that a beautiful rose bush?" He replied, "I am not interested in roses; I am not of this world." That is not the world that is spoken of in Scripture. The universe is the expression of the Father's wisdom and goodness.

Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth beneath is sweeter green!
Something lives in ev'ry hue
Christless eyes have never seen:
Birds with gladder song o'erflow,
Flow'rs with deeper beauties shine,

Since I know, as now I know,

I am His, and He is mine!

George W. Robinson

The Lord loved the lilies of the field. He drew attention to the beauties of nature. They stirred His own soul, and He wants His people to see in them the evidences of the wisdom and goodness of the Father. But what, then, is the world we are to hate? It is the system that man has built up on earth, in which he is trying to make himself happy without God. The world's system really began back in Genesis when Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city. It was a wonderful world. They were skilled in all kinds of arts, sciences, business, and pleasure—anything and everything to make them happy without God. But it ended in corruption and violence, and God had to sweep the whole thing away with a flood. The principles of the world that caused the corruption and violence before the flood were carried into the ark in the hearts of some of Noah's children. They brought the world into the ark, and when they emerged from the flood, they brought the world out of the ark with them and set it up again.

What is then the world, which John described as the “lust of the flesh” (the gratification of the flesh), and “the lust of the eyes” (the desires of the unregenerate soul)? When some think of the world, they think of things that are abominable, vile and corrupt—saloons, gambling halls, and every kind of violence. These things offer little to attract the Christian heart. The world the Christian needs to beware of is the world of culture—the world that appeals to their esthetic nature. That world should hold as little attraction for the Christian as the corrupt, abominable world in the slums of our great cities. Don't

imagine yourself safe and free from worldliness because your world is in the arts and sciences. Even the business world may become a great snare. But you ask, "Don't we have to work?" Yes. Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). In all these things we have to watch against the evils of the world.

I remember when I was a young Christian, the world I had to guard against most was the world of literature. I used to love its poetry, essays, and wonderful books. I still appreciate them to a certain degree. But I have to remember that if ever these things come between my soul and my love for God's Word, I have to turn away from them and give my time and attention to Scripture. And so it is with anything that comes between you and your Lord.

There was a young lady with great musical ability preparing to go on the concert stage when the Lord saved her. She said one day, "You know I have made an amazing discovery. My love for music is coming between my soul and Christ." That young woman, for eight years, would not touch a musical instrument for fear she would become so absorbed that she would not enjoy the things of God. But the time came when she said, "Although I can't enjoy music for its own sake, I can use it as a vehicle to bless the souls of people." She gave her talent to Christ, and He used it in attracting people to hear the gospel. No matter what your world is, if you lay it down at Jesus' feet and use it for Him, you do not need to be afraid of it. But do not put your world before Jesus Christ.

For some a fine house is "the world." Suppose there is a Christian who has little worldly wealth. He lives in a quiet little

home and is happy and content. But then the Lord trusts him with a good deal of money, and he immediately says, "I must have a better house now. I must live in style. I must have magnificent furniture and fine draperies." What for? Is he any more comfortable? He can only eat three meals a day; he can only sleep in one bed and sit in one chair at a time. But he feels he must impress people. He is in love with "the things that are in the world."

Physical beauty can also get between you and Christ, and will prove to be "the world" if one is not careful. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

What is "the pride of life?" It is the pretentiousness of living, of trying to make an impression on others. It is the excessive exalting of oneself in the eyes of the world. I sometimes think if Christians took two-thirds of the money they invested in a mansion in this world, and invested it in sending the gospel to a lost world, they would have a much finer mansion in the eternal world. I was walking down the street one day with a friend. As he pointed out a particular home he said, "There is an awful lot of tragedy connected with that house. A man built this great home for his beautiful wife, and suddenly she died. Here is a house that had a lot of money put into it, but there was a suicide in the family, and now no one wants to live in it." There is no real joy in things. As Christians, our joy in Christ is the only joy that will last forever. Our joy is in the things that will never pass away, and yet it is sad to think that we can be so foolish and invest so much in what is fleeting and will leave us dissatisfied and unhappy in the end.

“But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” In obedience to God’s will there is lasting joy and endless gladness. In the light of that, who would not say,

Take the world, but give me Jesus,

All it’s joys are but a name,

But His love abideth ever,

Through eternal years the same.

Fanny J. Crosby

Have you made your choice? As a believer you made your first choice when you turned from sin to Christ. Have you made your next choice? Have you turned from the world to Christ? There are many who have trusted Jesus as their Savior from judgment, who have never learned to know Him. They have never learned to walk with Him in blessed fellowship

No one can ever put this world beneath his feet until he has found a better world above. When your heart is taken up with Christ in that eternal world, it is an easy thing to heed the exhortation, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

God’s Little Children—Their Privileges and Dangers (1 John 2:18-27)

We have noticed that the Holy Spirit in addressing the family of God has divided it into three classes, according to the measure of their growth in grace. We have already considered what the Lord has to say to the fathers in Christ and to the young men. Now we come to consider His message to God’s little children.

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (2:18). The word translated “little children” here, as pointed out on a previous occasion, is very different from the word translated “little children” in the first part of verse twelve. There it is a term of affection, and implies all who are born into God’s family, all His dear children, who are at varying degrees in their spiritual experience. But here the term includes not only those who have been recently saved, but also those who although saved for years, have not been well nourished or built up in Christ. While they should be in one of the more spiritually mature classes they are still God’s little children. These immature believers are passing through a world in which there are a great many adverse influences seeking to turn them away from the simplicity that is in Christ. So the apostle immediately warned them, and interestingly enough, he warned them against the spirit of antichrist. “Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” John is the only writer who used the term *antichrist*. Other terms used in Scripture are the “idol shepherd” (Zechariah 11:17), the one who “shall come in his own name” (John 5:43), the “son of perdition” and the “man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), the “lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), and the “false prophet” (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). These different terms describe the same person, the one who will arise during the great tribulation and lead apostate Christendom and Judaism farther away from God than they are at the present time.

The antichrist has not yet appeared, but the spirit of antichrist is in the world, for “even now are there many antichrists.” The

“spirit of antichrist” is the putting of man in the place of God and His Christ. It is self-worship or humanism. The little children need to be warned against this. Sadly many of the advocates of these unholy systems once claimed to be Christians. They took their places at the communion table, had fellowship outwardly with God’s people, were baptized, but now have turned away from Christianity and Scripture. They deny the precious blood they once confessed. Scripture says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28). So how are we to account for people who for years seemed to be just as real as any other professed believers, but now count “the blood of the covenant, wherewith [they were] sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Hebrews 10:29) and spurned the love of Jesus? The answer is, “They were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us” (1 John 2:19).

I remember how my heart was stirred after the war as I read of one of our great American preachers who was great from the standpoint of ability, culture, and rhetoric, but knew nothing of the saving grace of God. He said that after he had been to Europe and after his experience in the trenches, he threw overboard the doctrine of blood-atonement through the precious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, gave up the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and scoffed at His virgin birth and resurrection. How could so great a preacher repudiate these truths? We don’t need to guess about this, for the answer is given by the Holy Spirit Himself in verse 19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been

of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Their going out made it evident that they were not genuine believers. They carried the Christian name, they joined a Christian church, they were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and they took the bread and the wine at the table of the Lord. But He who sees not as man sees said, “The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table” (Luke 22:21). He knew what Judas really was, and so said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70) He was never anything else.

God knows who are the unreal among His people today. He knows all who mingle with the people of God, who profess the name of Christ, but have never known the blessing of regenerating grace, never bowed in repentance at the cross of Christ, never been washed from their sins in the Savior’s precious blood. The hardest thing in the world to do is to attempt to live like a Christian when you have no Christian life. It would be easier for one of the beasts of the field to set himself up in a mansion and try to live the life of a millionaire human being, than for an unregenerate sinner to try to live the life of a Christian. “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And so John wrote of men mingling with Christians and outwardly looking like them, but he said, “They were not of us.” They were not genuine.

Oh, may each one of us search our hearts in the presence of God and ask ourselves, have I really faced my sins in the light of the cross of Christ? Have I truly turned to God in repentance, admitting my guilt, acknowledging my iniquity,

and fled for refuge to the hope given me in the gospel? Do I show evidence of a regenerate soul? Do I love the brethren? Do I love the commandments of God? Is the Word of God sweet to me, and do I delight to feed on it? Is it my joy to serve the Lord, or are these things wearisome to me? I am persuaded, and I say this with love, that there are tens of thousands of people today whose names are on a church roll who have never had their names enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life. There are tens of thousands of people struggling to live a Christian life, and making a complete failure of it because they have never yet been born again.

If a great revival were to come to this land, one of the first evidences of it will be that people who have used the Christian name and passed for Christian workers will begin to find out that they themselves have never been saved. They will break down before God, and confess their sins and judge their iniquities and selfishness. How dreadful to never find out the truth until the day of judgment when it is too late to rectify the error!

John wrote of these pretenders, "They went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). Once outside they became the worst opponents of those who stood for the truth of God. There is no one who hates the gospel like the man who once professed to be saved but afterward turned to a life of sin because there was no reality in his profession. These were the antichrists John warned the little children about in his day.

How are the little children to guard against these false teachers? Look at verses 20 and 21. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written

unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” He said, “Ye know all things”—not actually every detail, but potentially. You have dwelling in you the One who does know, and therefore you don’t need to be carried away by any form of error. What do young believers have as their resource? They have the Spirit of God and the Word of God. They have the Word of God in their hearts and the Spirit of God dwelling in them to open the truth to them. When people come with their false teachings that deny the atoning blood, or the deity of Christ, or emphasize human attainment, the young ones in Christ can turn back to the Word of God, and the Spirit of God dwelling in them opens the Word to them and thus preserves them from error.

The story is told by a well-known English minister, how one night, when he was just ready to retire, there came a knock at his door. When he went downstairs, he found at the door a poor, wretched little girl, dripping wet. She had come through the storm, and she said, “Are you the minister?”

“Yes,” he said, “I am.” He was at that time one who had turned away from the simplicity of the gospel.

“Will you please come and get my mother in?” she asked.

The minister replied, “I was just about to retire, and besides it is hardly proper for me to go out in this weather and bring your mother in. If she is drunk, you can get a policeman to fetch her. He has his oilskins on and is prepared for the storm.”

“Oh no,” said the little girl, “you don’t understand! My mother is not out in the storm, and she is not drunk. She is at home dying, and she is afraid to die. She is afraid she is going to be

lost forever. She wants to go to Heaven and doesn't know how, so I told her I would get a minister to get her in."

He asked where she lived, and she told him of a district so corrupt that even in the daytime respectable people did not go there without a police escort. "Why," he said, "I can't go down there tonight." To himself he reasoned, *It would ruin my reputation to be seen with a girl like this in that district in the middle of the night. No, I cannot go. I am the preacher of a large and important church. What would my congregation think if it should get into the papers?*

To the girl he said, "I will tell you what to do. You go down and get the man who is running the Rescue Mission. He will be glad to help you." He felt ashamed as he said it, but decided his reputation had to be maintained.

"He may be a good man," replied the girl, "but I don't know him. I told my mother I would get a real minister, and I want you to come and get her in. Please come quickly; she's dying."

"I couldn't stand the challenge in those eyes," the preacher confessed. He felt ashamed, and so he said to her, "Very well, I will come." He went upstairs, got dressed, and put on his overcoat.

Then the girl led him down through the city, into the slum district, into an old house, up a rickety stairway, and along a long dark hall into a little room where lay the poor woman. "I have gotten the preacher of the biggest church in the city," said the girl. "He will get you in. He didn't want to come, but he's here. You tell him what you want, and do just what he tells you to do."

The woman looked up and said, “Oh, sir, can you do anything for a poor sinner? All my life I have been a wicked woman, and I am going to Hell. But I don’t want to go there. I want to be saved and go to Heaven. Tell me what I can do.”

The preacher related how he stood there looking down at that poor anxious face, and thought, *Whatever will I tell her? I have been preaching in my own church on salvation by character, ethical culture, and reformation. But I can’t tell her about salvation by character, for she hasn’t any. I can’t tell her about salvation by ethical culture, for there’s no time for culture, and besides she most likely wouldn’t know what I meant. I can’t tell her about salvation by reformation, for she has gone too far to reform. Then it came to me, why not tell her what my mother used to tell me? She’s dying, and it can’t hurt her, even though it will do her no good.* And so he said, “My poor woman, God is very gracious, and the Bible says, ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

She replied, “Does it say that in the Bible? My! This should help get me in. But, sir, my sins! What about my sins?”

The minister said that it was amazing the way the verses came to him, verses he had learned years ago and never used. He said to the woman, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“All sin?” she asked. “Does it really say that the blood will cleanse me from *all* sin? That ought to get me in.”

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15).

“Well,” she said, “If the chief got in, I can come too. Pray for me!”

He knelt down and prayed with that poor woman and *got her in*, and while he was getting her in, he got himself in. Those two poor sinners, the minister and the dying harlot, were saved together in that little room.

Those messages that have nothing in them to help a poor, guilty, Hell-bound sinner, are an abomination in the sight of God! But, thank God, He has given His little children the blessed Holy Spirit to guide, direct, instruct, and open to them the truth. And through the truth they are kept from the power of the evil one.

Then we read, “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). John continued with strong language:

“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *but he that acknowledged the Son hath the Father also*” (2:23).

The words placed in italics in our King James version generally represent words not found in the Greek, but since the New Testament was translated in 1611 many other manuscripts have been discovered, and they all contain these words.

“Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” (2:24). If the gospel has not gripped your heart, you will some day drift away as others have drifted away. “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is

no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (2:26-27). They were not to be dependent on human wisdom, for they had the Word of God opened to them by the Holy Spirit.

This then is the comfort, stay, and protection of God’s little children. They may not know very much, but they know Christ. They have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and they have the Word of God to instruct them. May we all learn to value what God has graciously committed to us.

Christ’s Appearing (1 John 2:28-29)

In verse 28 as in verse 12, John used once again the term, *dear children*, to address all the family of God irrespective of maturity or age. He said, “And now, [dear] children, abide in him.” To abide in Him is to live in fellowship with Him. It is one thing to be in Him—having life in Him—but it is another thing to abide in Him—enjoying communion with Him. There are many who have life in Christ but are not happy in His presence. They permit something to come into their life that hinders fellowship.

You know how it is in a family. When the children are in harmony with the father and mother they give their parents satisfaction and there is peace, joy, and fellowship. But if one of the children is out of touch with the rest and has been willful, disobedient, and ungrateful in one way or another, there is a barrier between that child and the parents. Not that the parents do not love the child as much as ever, but they realize that his behavior has come in the way of fellowship. So it is with the children of God. John says, “And now, [dear] children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have

confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (2:28).

It is at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ that our rewards will be given out. “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12). In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” The apostle was desirous that when the day of reckoning comes, “we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him.” Notice the pronoun *we*. He was addressing the children, and so you would expect him to say, “That, when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” But he was speaking as a servant of Christ, and was addressing those whom he had either led to Christ or sought to help in the ways of God. He spoke for all Christ’s servants as he addressed all God’s people, and said in effect, “We are accountable, and have a tremendous sense of responsibility in regard to you.” Another apostle spoke of Christ’s undershepherds as those who had heavy responsibility, and said, “They watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

I remember some years ago trying to speak on 1 John 2:28 to a crowded house in Detroit. After dismissing the audience at the close of the meeting, I saw a young woman on the left side of the church push her way across to the right side. She threw herself weeping into the arms of a beautiful Christian woman, saying, “Oh, Mrs.M-----, will you forgive me? Can you forgive me?” The woman tried to quiet and soothe her, and said, “It is not I who needs to forgive you. If you have sinned, you have

done so against the Lord. Go to Him.” “Oh,” the young woman said, “but you led me to Christ. You were my Sunday School teacher, and you tried to encourage me on. I used to be so happy as a young Christian, and then I fell in love with an unsaved man. You warned me that it was not the right thing for a Christian girl to do. You warned me about the unequal yoke, but I reasoned that I would soon bring him around, and he would become a Christian. But it hasn’t worked that way. He has taken me away from the church of God and into the world. This is the first meeting I have attended for months. I have been going with him to the theater and dance hall and have lost out. It never dawned on me how ashamed you would be of me at the judgment seat of Christ. I want to be right with God.” I saw that dear woman take her into a side room for a time of prayer. When they came out their faces were shining.

It is one thing to come to Christ. It is another thing to behave yourself in such a way that those who led you to Christ and watched over your soul can give account with joy in that great day. Sometimes even here on earth I have been a little ashamed. I have gone into certain places and met someone who did not seem to be a devoted Christian. Then someone would ask, “Don’t you know so and so?” “I’m not sure that I do,” I replied. “Well, he is one of your converts.” I know that they mean he has professed to be converted in one of my meetings, but he has not been living for Christ. Nothing gives a true servant of Christ greater joy, after the conversion of sinners, than to see those he has won for the Savior glorifying Him in their lives.

Do you remember when you first came to trust in Christ? What have you been doing since? What has the Lord been

getting out of your life? Have you been flirting with the world, trying to straddle the fence? You cannot do this without going astray. If you have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ and regenerated by the grace of His Holy Spirit, let Him have the best of your life. Abide in Him. Then in that coming day when the servants of Christ come up before the judgment seat to be rewarded according to their service, they won't be ashamed of you. Think of D. L. Moody standing before the Lord, and saying, "Lord, behold, I and the children whom You have given me," and then think of some of those converts as they stand there saying to themselves, "Oh, how I wish I had lived more in accord with what my dear father in Christ taught me."

In verse 29 John reminded us of what should characterize those who have been born of God. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Don't be content to say, "I have trusted Christ and have been made the righteousness of God in Him." When God justifies a man by faith, He proceeds to make that man just by the working of His Holy Spirit. He does not justify people by faith and leave them in an unjust condition. Everyone that is born of God does righteousness, loves righteousness, and seeks to walk in righteousness. Let us test ourselves by some of these things, and see whether or not we are professing to be Christians when we have never known righteousness.

1 John, Chapter 3: God Is Love

The Father's Love and Christ's Appearing (1 John 3:1-3)

What beautiful words are written to believers in the opening verses of 1 John 3. First comes the “manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” This is something different from the general love of John 3:16, “For God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That is infinite love to lost men everywhere. If you are not a believer, be assured of this: the love of God goes out to you and he has extended His love to you in that while you were yet a sinner Christ died for you. However, there is a love sweeter and more precious than that, but it is not for you until you trust in Christ. But if you have already trusted in Him, then you can enter into the Father's love. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” It is the *children* who are addressed, not sons. It is a peculiar thing in the King James version, that often in the translation of John's writings, the word *sons* is used where it should be *children*: “That we should be called the *children* of God.” And because we are the children of God “the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

If you are using a revised version you will notice that there are several words added, which were found in some old manuscripts that were not known when the King James version was translated, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called

children of God, *and so we are.*” It is not that we hope to be, *but we are.* Are you clear about that? If you are, you will never sing,

Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causes anxious thought,

Do I love my Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?

I would not dishonor my Lord by singing words like that when I read, “Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Therefore, because we are—because we have been born of God and regenerated—the world does not understand. The world does not know us because it did not know Christ. If it did not know Him, we cannot expect it to recognize us. Because He passed through this world a stranger and a pilgrim, we too go through it as strangers and pilgrims, refusing to look at things from the world’s standpoint.

“Beloved, now are we the [children] of God”—not we hope to find that we are such when we get to Heaven but—“*Now* are we the children of God” (1 John 3:2). But there is something we are waiting for. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Soon every believer will be fully conformed to His blessed image—this is our great expectation. What a wonderful day that will be! Even now God looks at His people as they are going to be when He gets through with them. We look at each other as we are now, and get discouraged with ourselves and with one another. But God is looking at us as we will be when we see our blessed Lord and are changed into His glorious image.

A story is told of an artist who had in his mind the conception of a great picture he was going to paint. He stretched his vast canvas straight across one side of his large studio, put up the scaffolding, brought the big, thick brushes, and prepared the paint. It looked like a job of house painting. He painted with great sweeps of his brush as he put in the background. Day after day he would walk back and forth putting a dab of gray here, and dab of blue there, and some black there. One day he came down from the scaffolding to look at it. He kept moving back, and back, and back. A visitor had come in unnoticed, and as the artist moved backward he bumped right into him. He turned around and said, "Why are you here? I didn't know you had come in. What do you think of my picture? It is going to be the masterpiece of my life. Isn't it magnificent?" The other said, "I don't see anything there but a lot of great daubs of paint." "Oh, I forgot," said the artist; "you can see only what is there, while I can see the picture as it is going to be." The blessed Lord sees us as we are going to be when we see Him, for then we will be just like Him. Even now on earth, "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). And when we see Him as He is, we will become just like Him.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). It is literally, "Every man that hath this hope set *on Him*"—looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, the blessed hope of His return. I do not know any incentive to godly living like the hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. People must be weaned away from the world by heart-occupation with the coming Savior. You cannot be occupied with Him and occupied with the world at

the same time. It is impossible not to be weaned away from the world when your heart is totally surrendered to Him. You do not have to give up the world for Jesus' sake. The fact of the matter is that, "The things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of His glory and grace." When you are looking for His return, you cannot enjoy the things of the world that crucified Him. Conversely, if you are a Christian and trying to enjoy the world, forgetting that you are called to be separate from the world, you cannot enjoy Christ. You cannot enjoy Christ and the world at the same time. In the flyleaf of John Bunyan's Bible he had written, "This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book." And so we may say, occupation with Christ will save you from worldliness, or worldliness will hide the glory of His wonderful face. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

The Two Natures (1 John 3:4-10)

We have in the fourth verse what appears to be a definition of sin. What is sin? There was a little boy who when his Sunday schoolteacher asked him this question, said, "I think it is anything you like to do." That is not far from wrong, because in our natural state we are so utterly out of touch with God that we like to do those things that are contrary to His holy will. The definition of sin is given in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The King James translation is not very accurate. The verse should read, "Whosoever committeth sin committeth lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness." In other words, sin does not consist merely in the breaking of a revealed law. The King James version seems to indicate this,

but if we turn back to Romans, we are told that “where no law is, there is no transgression” (4:15), but “until the law sin was in the world” (5:13).

If sin is the transgression of the law, how could sin have been in the world before the law was given? If we accept the more accurate rendering, all is clear. “Sin is lawlessness,” and that is the very essence of sin. It is rebellion against God—taking my own way. This is something we all do naturally. Isaiah said, “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” (Isaiah 53:6).

I was a wand’ring sheep,
I did not love the fold,
I did not love my Shepherd’s voice,
I would not be controlled:
I was a wayward child,
I did not love my home,
I did not love my Father’s voice,
I loved afar to roam.

Horatius Bonar

Rebellion characterizes every man or woman who has never been subdued by divine grace. Sin therefore is self-will—it is taking my own way and not subjecting myself to the will of God.

1 John 3:5 tells us, “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” Here John declared more than he did in his Gospel. In John 1:29 John the Baptist

exclaimed as he pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In his Gospel John directed us to Christ's work on the cross. There He settled the sin question and because of that finished work He is able to show grace to all men everywhere. But here in the Epistle, we have deliverance from the practice of sin for those who are already saved: "He was manifested to take away our sins." "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The Word says, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Our blessed Lord not only saves us from the guilt of sin through the work of His cross, but He has provided the means whereby He may save us from the power of sin. He takes away the habit of sinning through the indwelling Holy Spirit after the new nature has been communicated to us through the new birth. People who loved to sin and go their own way, now delight in holiness and find their joy in doing His will. This is the characteristic mark of a Christian. A man who has professed to accept Christ as his Savior, to have been justified by faith through His atoning blood, and yet goes on living in the world and liking the world, shows that he has never had a renewed nature. He is simply a hypocrite because he is pretending to be what he is not. A real Christian is one who has been born again, one who has a new life and a new nature and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore has learned to hate the sin in which he once lived.

"Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). It was said of the sin offering, "It is most holy" (Leviticus 6:17). If our blessed Lord Jesus would

become the great sin offering for the world, He must be the Holy One— the Lamb without blemish and without spot, both outwardly and inwardly. The Spirit of God is careful to insist that this perfection is true of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again Scripture dwells on His infinite beauty and holiness. “He did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22) and, “In him is no sin.” And now this absolutely sinless One, who in grace became sin for us that we might be reconciled to God, dwells by the Spirit in the believer. Our new nature is really His very life imparted to us. It is in the power of this life that we triumph over sin.

There is a friend of mine who has been for a long time a confirmed addict to the disgusting cigarette habit. He has tried to free himself from this habit, and wants to be free, but this thing has such a hold on him that unfortunately physicians have told him it would be best to continue smoking. I cannot tell you how many times I have looked at him and said, “Oh, how I wish it were possible for me in some way to get control of your will so that this habit would go away, because I detest it so! If I could only get within you so that my mind could control yours, and my feelings toward this thing would take possession of you, then you would never smoke again.” That is exactly what the Lord does for those who trust Him. He dwells within us, and as we yield to Him, He takes full control. He dominates the believer so that he lives to His praise and to His glory.

Next the apostle went on to show what holiness really means in the Christian's life. “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not [is not characterized by sinning]: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (1 John 3:6). This verse used to trouble me, because I was not clear about it. I used to read it

as though it said, “Whosoever committeth a sin hath not seen him, neither known him.” Verse eight was particularly disturbing: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” And as I got my eyes off the Lord and allowed myself to fall into something that dishonored Him, those words were the torment of my life—“He that committeth sin is of the devil.” This verse seems to say that whoever sins has never been a Christian at all. I was greatly troubled, for I knew I had not gotten to the place of sinless perfection, even though I was trying to get there in those days. I was so sure I was born of God—that I was converted—but wondered if it had all been a mistake. I went to a teacher and asked him about this, and he said, “You have been converted all right, but every time you commit a sin you become unconverted again, and a child of the devil once more.” That made me even more bewildered than before, and I wondered how I would ever know when I was converted to stay. If I were converted over and over again how would I know for sure that I was still converted just before I died? I might suddenly become a child of the devil again and miss everything.

What a relief of mind it was to get a better understanding of the tense of the verbs! Contrast 1 John 3:6 with 2:1, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” He does not say if any man sin he ceases to be a child of God, but, “We have an advocate with the Father.” The word *sin* is in the aorist tense, and refers to a definite action at a given point of time, “If any man should fall into a sin.” But chapter three verse six is in the present continuous tense, “Whosoever goes on practicing sin, whosoever makes it the habit of his life to live in sin, hath not seen him neither known him.” Peter fell into grievous sin, and that sin was repeated and

repeated. But when the Lord turned and looked at him, he went out and wept bitterly. His heart was broken because of his failure, and he was soon restored. True believers fall into sin if for a moment their eyes are taken off the Lord Jesus Christ. But the advocacy of the Lord Jesus begins at that moment, and He restores their souls.

The fear of losing his salvation troubled a dear Irishman who had been wonderfully saved. The thought came to him, "Dear me, if I am so happy in the Lord now, what an awful thing it would be if something happened that cut me off from Christ and I should be lost after all!" He went to a meeting, and a preacher read these words, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). The truth of that verse dawned on the Irish brother with such clarity that he shouted, "Glory to God, whoever heard of a man drowning with his head that high above water!"

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Children [this is the word that takes in the whole family of God], let no man deceive you: he that [practises] righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that [practises] sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth [has made sin a practice] from the beginning" (1 John 3:6-8). All through his fearful history the devil has been characterized by rebellion against God. He practiced sin from the beginning. Those who are children of the devil exhibit the moral characteristics of their father, while those who belong to the family of God exhibit the moral characteristics of their Father. They delight in holiness even as the others roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy [undo or annul] the works of the devil.” Dear believer, there is not only deliverance from the judgment due your sin, but deliverance has been provided from the power of sin. He provides deliverance over sin that He might annul the works of the devil. He sets His people free from the power of sin and Satan that they might live in this world to the praise of His glory.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin [practice sin]; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin [cannot be sinning], because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). When I think of justification, I think of a forensic act of God by which I am cleared of every charge of guilt. When I think of regeneration, I think of the imparting of a new nature through the power of the Holy Spirit in which the whole direction of my life is changed.

Years ago when I went to California as a boy, the only oranges we knew were the ones with seeds. But then two of the Washington navel orange trees were brought to Riverside from Brazil and cultivated. Cuttings were taken from these parent trees at Riverside, and orange trees were budded with the Washington navel shoots, and their character was completely changed. A man having a forty acre orchard and not wanting to be left completely without fruit, would have the tops of one half of the trees cut off. Twenty acres would go on bearing the oranges with the seeds. But he would cut under the bark of the lopped trees, and put in the navel orange cuttings, and in a couple of years all those trees would have new branches and would be loaded with oranges. I might say to the owner, “What kind of oranges are these?” “Washington navel oranges,” he

would reply. “Is that the only kind of oranges they bear? Don’t they sometimes bear oranges with seeds?” “Oh no,” he would say; “A budded tree does not produce seeded oranges.” But even as he speaks I stoop down and see a little shoot under the branches coming out of the trunk of the tree, and say, “Look, what is that shoot?” He would snip it off, or taking his knife out of his pocket would cut it away, saying, “That’s from below the graft. It must be pruned off.” You see what is characteristic of the budded tree is that it bears the navel oranges, but if one does not watch, below the grafting there will be a shoot of the old nature. Likewise as children of God we cannot go on living in sin. If you ever find a Christian slipping into anything unclean or unholy, you know that this comes from below the graft— it is the old nature manifesting itself!

How can you keep the old nature from producing sin? By using the pruning knife of self-judgment. Whenever you find any tendency of rebellion against God, any tendency of self-will, any tendency to think of unclean or unholy things, get out the pruning knife and use it unsparingly on yourself. These tendencies are of the old nature, not of the new, and they must not be allowed to grow and develop, or they will destroy your fellowship with God. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,...because he is born of God.” The new life given to him is eternal life. It abides in him, and he cannot continue in sin because he is born of God.

The tenth verse summarizes it all: “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” We must face the fact that there are two families.

Men talk about the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and would have us believe that all men are considered by God as His children. But it was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who taught the very opposite. What did He mean when He said to the Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the [works] of your father ye will do”? (John 8:44) What did He mean when He said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”? (John 3:3) John walked with the Lord for three-and-one-half years, drank in His testimony as perhaps no other, and is referred to several times in the Gospel of John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He wrote his Epistle when he was an old man, and gathered up what he had been taught by the Lord and what he had experienced through the years. He said in effect, “Here are the two families. The family that loves God and delights in righteousness is the family of God. But the family that hates, that harms, that loves sin and iniquity is the family of the devil.”

Let us challenge our own hearts. Let us face the question honestly in God’s presence. Have I been regenerated by divine grace? If we are really saved, we will find the answer in verse 14: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”

Love, the Proof of Divine Life (1 John 3:11-24)

This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (3:11). We have noticed a number of times that this expression, “From the beginning,” is characteristic of John’s Epistle. In a day when men were trying to bring in false teachings and seeking to palm them off on

unsuspecting people as Christianity, when in reality they were doctrines of demons, the apostle called the Christians back to what they had been taught from the beginning. He emphasized the teaching of our Lord Jesus and His immediate successors, the apostles.

There are three distinct words used for love in the Greek language. One of these words is never used in the New Testament. It is the word *eros*. This word was also the name of the Greek equivalent to Cupid. According to Roman mythology Cupid was the son of Venus, the goddess of sensual love and physical beauty. Among the Greeks they used the name Aphrodite for the goddess, and Eros for her son. This word for love is never used in the New Testament probably because it had been degraded among the Greeks. It would seem that the Holy Spirit of God stood guard over the pages of the New Testament, and said as it were, “Don’t pollute these pages with a word that has become so debased.”

The other words for love are *phileo* and *agapao*. *Phileo* means affection or friendliness—the kind of love that good-natured people feel one for another. This word is used frequently in the New Testament. It is used of God in one place—“After that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:4-5). “Love...toward man” is just one word in the original. It is really our word *philanthropy*. In other words, the philanthropy of God was revealed in sending His Son. Ordinarily *phileo* is the word that is used for love between friends, brothers, sisters, husband, wife, and sometimes between Christians. But it is not

used in the sense that the word *agapao* is used. This word signifies a divine love.

God is *agape*. He Himself is love in His very essence, and “he that dwelleth in love [in this sense], dwelleth in God” (1 John 4:16). It is this highest of divine loves—*agape* love—that is brought before us in this portion of the Epistle. This love is the proof of a new nature, the evidence that we have been regenerated.

The one great command that is laid on us by our Lord Jesus is that we love one another as He loved us—unselfishly, in a Godlike, Christ-like way. “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (3:12). Cain was stirred up by jealousy and lured on by envy. What a terrible thing is this sin. Scripture says that jealousy is “cruel as the grave” (Song of Solomon 8:6). Never allow yourself to harbor jealousy in your heart. Check it immediately. Go into the presence of God at once and confess it, and ask Him to fill you with Himself so there will be no place for it. I have seen jealousy among Christian workers and have felt it in my own heart in connection with other preachers. One man has a message from God and gives it in the power of the Holy Ghost, but another cannot bear to think that his brother’s message is appreciated more than his own. He falls under the power of the same sin that led Cain to slay his brother, Abel. I have seen it also among those who sing, among Sunday school teachers, and even among those ministering to the temporal needs of the saints.

I remember attending a fellowship tea where two dear sisters would not speak to nor look at one another because one had

found that the efforts of the other were appreciated more than her own. What a wretched thing is jealousy! There is no room for it in love or in the new nature. Whenever you find it, it is simply an evidence of a shoot from the old nature that needs to be pruned and cut away. Jealousy is indeed as cruel as the grave. Because of it, people will tear one another's reputations to shreds and go to extreme lengths in order to belittle and degrade them. It seems strange that we Christians, hated by the world and small in number, should ever allow ourselves to indulge in such unkind feelings towards one another.

The story is told of Nelson, who, as his ships were drawn up in battle array facing the Dutch fleet, saw two English officers quarreling. He threw himself between and pushed them apart. Pointing to the ships of Holland he said, "Gentlemen, there are your enemies!" If only Christians would truly love one another, then it would not bother us if the world hated us. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:13-14).

Do we know that we have passed from death unto life because we are sound in the faith, because we are fundamentalists, because we are earnest Christian workers, or because we give liberally to missions or the Lord's work? No. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We love them in the divine sense—with agape.

Dear friend, if you don't have that testimony you better begin to investigate the foundations of your Christian profession. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." As unbelievers, some of us did not love Christians very much. I remember some Christian men who

would come to our home when I was a boy. They were stern old Scotsmen, and would say, "Harry, lad, are ye born again yet?" I wouldn't know what to say, and so I detested them! Then one day God came in grace and saved my soul. I could hardly wait to see some of them and say, "Thank God, I am saved!" Regeneration made such a difference. Being born again, being converted to God, is a real thing. It is the imparting of a new, divine nature, the very essence of which is love.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (3:15). The same thing that leads you to hate your brother, produces the sin of murder. It may not have gone that far yet. I heard a professed Christian woman speaking of another, and between her clenched teeth, she said, "I wish she were dead." That is murder! That is what sends men to the electric chair.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." "But," you say, "you heard a *Christian* woman say that?" Yes, but that was just for a moment, when she allowed the old nature to assert itself. She soon judged it and put it away. If Christians get out of touch with God, there may be a demonstration of the old flesh, or carnal mind. But they are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and He will soon make them intensely miserable, and they will judge their sin and put it to death. No one who willfully goes on in these sins has any business calling himself a child of God. No one who is characterized by hatred has eternal life abiding in him. No murderer possesses eternal life, and hatred is the root of murder. This does not mean that an actual murderer cannot be saved. It does mean that if he is saved, he will no longer live in hatred.

“Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (3:16). You will observe that the words “of *God*” are italicized in the King James version. John was saying that if we want to understand what divine love is, we need to look at Christ’s example. We recognize what love is because, “He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”—that is, if you want to know what is meant by divine love, Christ is the example. As a Christian, that which is manifested in Christ must be manifested in you. You must be willing to lay down your life for others, to endure any kind of hardship in order that you may help and bless others.

Years ago when I was a Salvation Army officer, General William Booth was over in London. He was an old, blind man. They had hoped to have him present at a great congress, but word was sent that he could not come. Then they asked for a letter from him— some message to read to the assembled officers—but no letter came. While the congress was in session, a boy came up the aisle with an envelope. It was given to the officer in charge, and as he held it up he exclaimed, “A message from General Booth!” He opened it, and said, “My comrades, it contains just one word—‘Others.’” That was all. That was what the old man had lived for, and that was what he would impress on those who followed him. After all, that is the only happy life. The most miserable people are those who are trying to get the best for themselves, while the happiest people are those who give the most, sacrifice the most, and expend themselves the most for the blessing of others. There is real joy in laying down one’s life for the brethren. There are always those who will say, “You are working too hard; you ought not to do this, and ought not to do that.” The devil always has a lot of lieutenants to say, “Be

careful; your health is much more important.” It is ten thousand times better to wear out for Jesus by blessing others, and hear a “Well done, good and faithful servant,” than to have to go to the judgment seat of Christ and give account for a lifetime of selfishness.

“But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (3:17) Do you say to yourself, “I know he has need, but if he had saved his money as I have done, he wouldn’t be in such a fix,” or “I know his clothes are shabby, but if he would take care of them as I do mine, he wouldn’t look like that”? We read in James 2:16 of those who say to the needy, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” God is looking down and taking note of it all, and some day the one who turns down God’s poor is going to be poor himself. Perhaps not poor financially in the same way that the other was, but a time of great need will come, and he will go to God and begin to call upon Him in that hour of distress and wonder why the heavens seem silent above him.

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:18-20). If in the secret of our hearts and in the presence of God, our conscience says, “You know you were selfish and inconsiderate, you did not act in love or show the Spirit of Christ,” remember that “if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” Then

we read, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (21-22). Do you get the inference? When you do not receive from Him, perhaps it is time to ask, "Is my heart condemning me? My need is great, yet God does not seem to minister to it. Have others come to me in their need, and have I failed to minister to them? I have cried to God in the depths of my grief and sorrow, but He does not seem to listen. Did anyone ever cry to me in their grief and sorrow, and did I refuse to listen?" "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Christianity is intensely practical. We may ask, "Is it not true that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved?" Yes. But we recognize real faith by its works of love. Do not forget that. If we have gone to Him in prayer and there has been no answer, then the secret of our unanswered prayer is in our own heart. Perhaps we have been selfish and indifferent to the needs of others. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3:23-24). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7), and when He dwells within the believer and controls him, that believer walks in love and manifests the kindness of God to his brethren.

1 John, Chapter 4: Living in God's Love

Jesus Christ Come in the Flesh (1 John 4:1-6)

The Scriptures recognize the fact that there is an unseen spirit world, and in that world there are both good and evil spirits. Of the angels it is written, He “maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” These good spirits have a certain ministry to the people of God here on earth, for we read, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:7, 14). Their ministry has to do with temporal mercies rather than with the unfolding of spiritual truths. There is another Spirit greater than all created spirits, whose job it is to guide us into all truth—that is the Holy Spirit of God. We as believers are not to look to angels for guidance and understanding, but to the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. This third person of the Trinity came into the world to take the things of Christ and open them to us.

On the other hand, there is a realm of evil spirits. We are told in Ephesians 6:12 that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It is possible for a man to be under the control of the Holy Spirit to such an extent that He is able to use that man to spread the truth of God in a mighty way. It is just as possible for a man to be under the control of the evil spirits, and teach lies instead of truth. When under their control he will seek to turn people away from the revealed message that God has given in His Word, and bring them into bondage to some form

of error. It is important, therefore, that we be able to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

In the early days of the Christian church there were those who came in among the assemblies, professing to be speaking by the Spirit of God, but teaching something contrary to what was plainly declared in God's Word. So John wrote, "Believe not every spirit, but try [or test] the spirits whether they are of God." But how do we test them? Study Scripture to see if what they say is in accordance with what is revealed in the Bible, for it was given by inspiration of God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, no one who is truly speaking through the Holy Spirit will teach anything that contradicts that revelation.

John's exhortation is of tremendous importance today as well, for there are still multitudes who profess to interpret the message of God to man, and claim to be under the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, who in reality are controlled by evil spirits. They speak things that they ought not to speak.

Scripture says that for the sake of money many false prophets are gone out into the world. A prophet is not necessarily one who foretells the future, but also one who comes to man with a message from God. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). So, when one comes professing to be a messenger from God, he must be tested by the Word of God.

The test is given in 1 John 4:2-3, "Hereby know ye the spirit of God: 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 antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come;

and even now already is it in the world.” Notice the simplicity of this test. Does a man confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh or does he deny the great doctrine of the incarnation? If a man confesses the incarnation, he is of God. That does not mean that everything else he teaches is necessarily Scriptural, but he had the right foundation if he confesses the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We begin—the whole Christian system begins—with the incarnation, not with an *apotheosis*. I do not like to use this theological term, for some of you may wonder what it means. But it is such a convenient term, and stands in direct contrast to the term *incarnation*. The word *apotheosis* comes from two Greek words, one meaning “from,” and the other “god” or the “deity.” So we speak of an apotheosis as a man entirely under an influence from God—a deified man. There are many ministers and instructors today who teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was a remarkable youth, a child born into this world in many respects the superior of any other child, a religious genius, who from budding consciousness was God-intoxicated. His sole direction in life was toward a greater knowledge of deity. He was always reaching out after God. They teach that Jesus was so constantly under God’s influence and so absorbed in Him that He eventually became like Him. Therefore, we see in Jesus Christ, God manifested. That is an *apotheosis*, and what is commonly taught by those who are called modernists. They deny the incarnation and affirm an apotheosis. The Word of God does not teach an apotheosis, but it does teach the incarnation.

What do we mean by the incarnation? We mean that God, who existed from eternity in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit, desired to make Himself known to men, and take upon Himself man's sin and iniquity, thus making full atonement for them. He stooped in grace in the person of the Son to identify Himself with humanity, and became incarnate by taking upon Himself flesh and blood. But, remember, it was God who did that. The baby in Bethlehem was not merely a remarkable child who was born with a great religious instinct, but that baby was God the Son. It was God who stooped in grace to dwell in the virgin's womb, and was born into this world as man. But He did not cease for one moment to be God. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." Not that Jesus Christ began to be when he was born into the world, but that He *came*—from where?—from Heaven. This is the incarnation, and every spirit that confesses this is of God.

Did you ever stop to think what a remarkable expression this is, "Jesus Christ came?" You were *born* into the world; you had no existence before you were conceived. Poetically, we ask,

Where did you come from, baby dear?

Out of the everywhere into here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue?

They came from the sky as I came through.

But that is only poetry. You *began* here on earth. You came into existence when you were born of your parents. But Jesus did not begin to be when He was born in the stable and cradled in the manger. He came from Heaven's highest glory down into this world to be the Savior of the world. He who was higher than all of the angels—He, their Creator—became a little lower than these glorious beings in order that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for every man.

Men may profess to honor Him while teaching an apotheosis. They may profess to think a great deal of Him by speaking of Him as the greatest religious genius that the world has ever known. They may even go so far as the French infidel, Renen, who declared, "From henceforth shall no man distinguish between Thee and God." But Renen only meant that Jesus, a man, had become so godlike that we saw God revealed in Him. That is not the incarnation. The great truth is that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). This is the Christian confession. Men may profess to honor Jesus by recognizing Him as the mightiest among the mighty, the greatest of all the great men of the world, the most marvelous of all its ethical teachers, but in reality they are only degrading Him unless they acknowledge Him as God over all. Jesus is God come in the flesh.

The denial of this fundamental doctrine is the spirit of antichrist. Notice, whether this denial is couched in rude or ignorant terms, or presented in beautiful language, it is the denial of the incarnation. To think of Jesus as anyone else than God—the Creator become man for our redemption—is to deny the truth concerning Him revealed in this Book and is the spirit of the antichrist.

Turning to believers with a word of warning, the apostle said, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the

world” (1 John 4:4). None of us would be what we are apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not by chance that one person believes in the deity of Jesus and one does not. No man would ever acknowledge Him as God become flesh except by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Even if men only acknowledge it intellectually, they do so because God has illumined the mind. But when men bow at the feet of the Savior and own Him as their Lord and Redeemer, that is the work of the Holy Spirit of God winning their hearts for Himself. From that moment on it is He who dwells in them and leads them on into fuller and clearer light and enables them to overcome. The believer takes no credit for himself, but gives all the glory to God for illuminating him and saving his soul.

My responsibility begins here. The Spirit of God illumines the mind and exercises the conscience, and I follow in accordance with His leading, until I am brought to a full acceptance and acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The man who follows the leading of the Holy Spirit of God must see in Jesus Christ, God the Son become man for our redemption. It is to these believers that John said, “Ye are of God.” When we speak of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we mean a great deal more than simply accepting a dogma regarding the deity of Jesus Christ. If I acknowledge Jesus Christ as God, I owe the allegiance of my heart and life to Him, and when I have been led by the Spirit of God to so put my trust in Him that makes me a Christian.

To believe in Him is to trust Him. You could stand by the sea looking at a large ship lying at anchor, and say, “I believe that is a splendid ship. I believe that it is thoroughly seaworthy and properly manned. I believe it would take me on a long journey.”

You may believe all that, but if you don't step aboard that ship it will never take you there. And so intellectually you may believe what is recorded about Jesus Christ, you may accept the full Scriptural declaration about Him, but unless you *trust yourself to Him*, He will never be your Savior and Redeemer. When you trust Him, you come into this family of which John is writing, and are made one of God's children. So it can be said of you, "Ye are of God, little children." When you turn away from the world and walk in obedience to His Word, you are a member of His family, not through any power of your own, but through the indwelling Holy Spirit, for, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Those who deny the deity of our Lord are of the world. They will always be popular in the world's eyes because "they speak of the world, and the world heareth them" (4:5). The world will always ridicule the person who stakes everything for eternity on a divine revelation, and it will honor the man who says, "I do not accept anything from God. I depend entirely on my own sound judgment." The world understands that kind of talk, for the wisdom of God is foolishness to the worldly-wise, but "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [not, through foolish preaching] to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Those who are born of God have an understanding far beyond that of earth.

It is not egotism that leads John to say, "We are of God" (1 John 4:6). This was a truth that he and his fellow apostles could claim having had the privilege of walking with the Lord for three-and-one-half years. John said of Jesus Christ, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace

and truth” (John 1:14). Knowing Him so intimately, John had irrefutable proof that Jesus was more than man. When He died, and rose triumphantly from the tomb, they met Him on resurrection ground and their faith was again confirmed. Later, when the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost and brought them the message that the risen Christ was exalted to God’s right hand, they were empowered to go out and preach the gospel. There were no doubts left—the last vestige of unbelief disappeared, and they could say, “We know that ‘we are of God.’”

“He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). Any man who knows God will hear the Word of God. We can test ourselves by that. Do you accept the testimony given in God’s Word—the testimony of our Lord Himself? He that is of God hears this testimony, and he that is not of God rejects it. John says, “Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” What a blessed thing it is to know God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing it is to realize that He has come so close to us. Jesus, the infinite holy One—the One whom our poor finite minds could not comprehend—has become man that we might see in Him God fully revealed. Shouldn’t we praise and adore Him?

Life and Propitiation in Christ (1 John 4:7-10)

After the parenthesis of verses 1 to 6 in which believers are warned against the false teachers and evil spirits that are seeking to turn the hearts of God’s people away from Christ, the apostle returned to his previous theme—the love that gives evidence of the divine nature.

If you remember from our study in chapter 3, there are two words for love used in the New Testament—*phileo* and *agapao*. *Phileo* refers to a mere human affection, although it is used once when God is spoken of as being a friend to man. *Agapao* speaks of a more utterly unselfish affection, a love which is seen in all its fullness in God Himself, and which was displayed in our Lord Jesus Christ here on earth. When the apostle said, “Beloved, let us love one another,” he does not merely seek to encourage a natural affection, but has in mind a divine affection. As believers, the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Being possessed of a new and divine nature, having been regenerated, the natural thing for the believer in the Lord Jesus is to love. “Let us love one another: for love is of God” (4:7). This love is simply the manifestation of the divine nature He has implanted within us. If you find a person who is not characterized by divine love, bearing the name of *Christian*, you can be reasonably sure that person has not yet been born again. On the other hand, be careful about snap judgments lest you yourself fail to exhibit divine love.

“Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” Not merely everyone who has natural affection for a father or mother or children or sister or brother, but everyone who loves in this divine unselfish way, demonstrates that he is born of God. Have you been born of God? I’m afraid too many people get in the habit of attending services and listening to Bible expositions, and to a certain degree even enjoying them, yet the power of God’s Word never grips their souls. Let us never forget the solemn words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Ye must be born again.” We are told that John Wesley used to preach on this text over and over again, until some people grew weary of hearing it and wished that he would use

another theme. Once after having preached on it in a place where he had done so many times before, someone said, “Mr. Wesley why do you preach so often on that one text, ‘Ye must be born again?’” “Why?” exclaimed Mr. Wesley. “Because ‘ye must be born again!’” Many people think they must join the church, be benevolent, turn over a new leaf, be good citizens, or be one hundred percent American in order to be a Christian. But you can do and be all these things and yet be lost for all eternity. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The proof that someone has been born again is that he exhibits this divine love. “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (4:7). On the other hand, “He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love” (4:8). Twice in this chapter we have that wonderful statement, “God is love.” Nowhere else in the world will you find this wonderful truth than in the Bible.

Years ago a lady who prided herself on belonging to the intelligentsia said to me, “I have no use for the Bible, Christian superstition, and religious dogma. It is enough for me to know that God is love.” “Well,” I said, “do you know it?” “Why, of course I do,” she said; “we all know it, and that is religion enough for me. I do not need the dogmas of the Bible.” “How did you find out that God is love?” I asked. “Why,” she said, “everybody knows it.” “Do they know it in India?” I asked. “That poor mother in her distress throwing her little baby into the Ganges to be eaten by filthy and repulsive crocodiles as a sacrifice for her sins—does she know that God is love?” “Oh, well, she is ignorant and superstitious,” she replied. “Those poor natives in the jungles of Africa, bowing down to gods of wood and stone, and in constant fear of their fetishes, the poor heathen in other countries—do they know that God is

love?” “Perhaps not,” she said, “but in a civilized country we all know it.” “But how is it that we know it? Who told us that God is love? Where did we discover it?” “I don’t understand what you mean,” she said. “I’ve always known it.” “Let me tell you this,” I answered. “No one in the world ever knew it until it was revealed from Heaven and recorded in the Word of God. It is here and nowhere else. It is not found in all the literature of the ancients.”

“God is love”—this is the divine nature, the very nature of God, and twice over you get it in this Epistle. How has that love been manifested? That is what the apostle explained in the next two verses.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (4:9). That is the first manifestation of divine love. Creation proclaimed God’s omnipotent power and wisdom, but creation could not proclaim His love. When God looked down on a world groaning under the sentence of death because of sin, a world of people who were alive to the things of this life, but dead to the things of God, God found it in His heart to go down after those people and find a means of bringing “whosoever will” into newness of life. He said in effect, “I am going to give them the greatest gift that one could possibly give, My only begotten Son. I am going to send Him into the world that they may have life through Him.”

Five times in the New Testament you will find the expression, “The only begotten,” and it always speaks of our Lord’s eternal relationship to the Father—the eternal Son, the Only Begotten. It doesn’t imply priority or generation. Notice the use of the same word in Hebrews 11. There you read of Abraham who had

received the promise and offered up his *only begotten son*. Isaac was not his only son. Abraham was the father of Ishmael years before Isaac was born, but Isaac is called his only begotten son. Why? Because Isaac was his son by a miraculous, unique relationship in which no other son could ever share. He had other sons afterwards, through Keturah, but none had the same relationship to him that Isaac had. And so this term “The only begotten son,” describes our Lord as one person of the trinity in eternal relation with the Father. It might be translated His *unique Son*. Others are sons by creation, as Adam was and as angels are, or by new birth, as believers are, but Jesus alone is the unique Son.

Five times He is called “The only begotten,” and five times “The first begotten.” In the latter term you have a different thought altogether. You have Christ coming into the world, going down into death, and rising in triumph at the head of a new creation. Thus He is the First Begotten, through whom God is “bringing many sons into glory” (Hebrews 2:10). In eternity the many sons will shine resplendent in the same glory, but not one of us will enter into the relation of the Only Begotten Son. That relationship remains unique for all eternity. Think of it! God the Father loved a world dead in trespasses and sins in such a way that He gave His unique Son, the darling of His bosom, that we might live through Him.

Because we were dead we needed life, and there is no life apart from Him. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life” (1 John 5:12). No work or effort of our own, could ever produce divine life. You cannot make yourself become a Christian. You cannot become a child of God by any effort of your own. No prayers or penances can

produce one spark of divine life within your soul. But the moment you receive Christ, you have received Him who is the life. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Life is found alone in Jesus,

Only there ‘tis offered thee—

Offered without price or money,

‘Tis the gift of God sent free.

Take salvation—

Take it now, and happy be.

While it is true that as dead sinners we need life, there is something required in order that God may righteously accept us as being perfectly justified in His sight. There was a work that had to be done that we could never do. That work God, in His infinite love and grace, sent His Son to accomplish. The second great proof of His love is found in verse 10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It is God who came out to us. We did not seek after Him. We did not love God, and our hearts were filled with hatred for Him. But He met our every need. You see, because we were dead we needed life and God sent Christ that we might live through Him. Because we were lost and guilty sinners it was necessary that a propitiation be made for sin, and God sent His Son to effect that propitiation.

It is an interesting fact that the original word translated “propitiation” is exactly the same word that is used for “atonement” in the Septuagint translation of the Old

Testament. In this Greek translation of the Old Testament, wherever the translators sought to reproduce the Hebrew word *caphar*, or *atonement*, they used the Greek word here rendered “propitiation.” The Hebrew word *atonement* comes from a root meaning “to cover.” This word speaks of an expiation, a settling of the sin-question, so that one who was once lost and guilty may stand in the presence of God without one charge against him. All his transgressions are covered by the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ—covered so effectually and completely that they will never be found again.

“Clean ev’ry whit;” Thou saidst it, Lord;

Shall one suspicion lurk?

Thine surely is a faithful Word,

And Thine a finished work.

On the cross the Son of God took our place in judgment. It was not merely the sufferings that men heaped on Jesus that settled the sin-question, but there as he hung upon the cross and supernatural darkness covered the scene, we read that Jehovah made “his soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). In those hours of darkness God was dealing with His Son in judgment. There He bore in His inmost soul the punishment that you and I would have to bear ourselves for all eternity if left without a Savior. There He became the propitiation and expiation for our sins. It is at the cross that we see the fullest extent of God’s love.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). This indeed is love. We hated Him, we loved our own way, we wanted to take our own course, and we did not want

to be submissive to His will. But He loved us and looked upon us in grace. He yearned to have us with Him in glory, free from every stain of sin. And because there was no other way whereby we could be justified, He sent His Son to become the propitiation for our sins. Don't talk about believing God is love if you won't accept the gift of His love, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Christ alone we have life and propitiation. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), but the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God Manifested in Love (1 John 4:11-13)

Notice carefully what the Spirit of God brings before us here. First, "Beloved, if God so loved us" (4:11). What does he mean when He puts in this little word so? He is referring back to the tenth verse, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." That is how God so loved us. He did not wait for us to love Him first; He did not wait for us to behave ourselves before loving us, but "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God loved us when there was nothing lovable about us. God loved us when we were at enmity against Him and "alienated...by wicked works" (Colossians 1:21). God loved us when our desires were contrary to His desires, when we were trampling His Word beneath our feet, spurning His grace, and breaking His commandments. Now we read, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

We remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46) Even the most corrupt people in the world love those who seem to give them some

return for their affection. But the great principle laid down here is that after we have been born of God and are partakers of the divine nature, we will not wait for people to love us, but will love them no matter how they behave. That is divine love demonstrated through the new nature. This kind of love is a challenge even to Christians, because we still have the old nature in us. Though born of God, the Christian has a nature that came from fallen Adam, and that nature is selfish and is looking for satisfaction in others and in the things of this world. It is only through the power of the new, divine nature inherited at the second birth, that the Christian can rise to the standard set before him.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” I like that word, *ought*. It suggests duty. Sometimes Christians do not like to be reminded of duty, for they have an idea that duty is not consistent with grace. But the grace of God, when it is active in the life, leads men and women to do the things they ought. Here is one thing we ought to do—we ought to love one another. We ought to love those who do not love us, who mistreat us, who speak evil of us, who harm us, and who would ruin us if they could. That is the way God loves us. Nothing that men did to our blessed Lord Jesus, nothing that they said about Him, could change the attitude of His heart toward them. As He was hanging on the cross and the angry rabble cried out for His life, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). This is not natural love. No one loves like this naturally. This is divine, spiritual love, and is possible only by walking in the power of the new nature, which God gives to those who believe.

“No man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12). This is not the first time this expression is found in the Scriptures. In John 1:18 you will find the exact same words, “No man hath seen God at any time.” Let’s examine these controversial words, for Scripture seems to indicate that there were many instances where men saw God. Didn’t God speak with Moses face to face, and didn’t He put him in a cleft of the rock while He passed by? Didn’t Adam speak with God in the garden? And doesn’t Isaiah say that “In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1)? Didn’t Ezekiel have visions of God, and didn’t the glory of the Lord appear to Daniel and many others? Yes, and yet it remains true that, “No man hath seen God at any time.” God is a Spirit, infinite and eternal, and is Himself invisible. Christ, however, has revealed God to men. But before Jesus became incarnate, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit were all invisible. The Old Testament characters of whom it is written that they saw God, saw a form that God took—a Theophany—by which He revealed Himself to them. They saw His glory and splendor, but they could not see His deity.

No one, in a sense, has ever seen you. People have seen your body, your face, and your eyes, but they have never seen the real you—the spirit that looks out through your eyes. We cannot see the real man, for under present conditions the spirit of man is invisible. We shall never really see one another as long as we are in the flesh, but in eternity we shall see and know one another in spirit. No one has ever seen the sun. Someone might object to that and say, “How can you tell me that I have never seen the sun! Of course I have seen it. I have seen it rise, I have seen it moving through the heavens, I have

seen it set as it dips into the west.” But you are mistaken. You have never seen the sun! You have seen the robe of glory that envelopes it, but you cannot pierce that glory and see behind the flame that enfolds that great globe. That would be impossible. It is the sun that gives out that glory and you cannot even gaze on that in its full strength at noonday for one minute, because of its blinding glare. A great astronomer was so delighted when one of the finest telescopes was first invented that, in his haste to look at the sun through it, he forgot to put the dark glass over the lens. Swinging that great instrument into place, he leaned down and with the naked eye looked through the lens at the sun. The next moment he uttered a cry of pain as the blinding light burned his eye, destroying its sight completely.

Plato said, “The radiant light is the shadow of God.” David declared of God, Thou “coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2). The light, the glory, the radiance is just the garment, and God is behind it all, invisible.

We read in John 1:18 that “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Jesus Christ came into the world as God revealed in the flesh and made God known to man. We understand God as we could not have done otherwise. Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Christ is “the express image” of the Father. In other words, Jesus is the exact expression of God’s character. All that God is is seen in Jesus. Jesus walked this world for a brief period of thirty-three and one-half years, and during that time God was manifest, God was seen on the earth, in the person of His Son. When Jesus went back to

Heaven was God left without any manifestation on earth? We read, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). God dwells in all believers, but the Greek word for *dwelleth* is different from that for *abideth*. If we love one another, we exhibit the new and divine nature. If we walk in love, then men can see God in us, for God *abideth* in us. If we are living in fellowship with God, we are manifesting and making Him known.

We have read the account of the professed conversion of the President of China (Chiang Kai-shek). We hope there has been a real work in his soul, but only eternity will tell. I was reading how he came to his Christian wife who was saved long before he made a profession, and said, "I can't understand these Christians. They have been treated most abominably here. They have been robbed, beaten, and many of them killed. They have been persecuted fearfully, and yet I never find one of them retaliating. Anytime they can do anything for China and for our people, they are ready to do it. I do not understand them." "Well," said his wife, "that is the very essence of Christianity. They do that because they are Christians." That is how God is manifest in China, and how you and I are called on to manifest Him wherever we may be. There are many who will never read the Bible, but they are reading us. They are looking at our lives. How much of God is really seen in us?

You are writing a gospel, a chapter a day,

By deeds that you do, by words that you say.

Men read what you write, whether faithless or true;

Say, what is the gospel *according* to you?

People may never read the Gospel of Matthew, never look at the Gospel of Luke, never heed the Gospel of Mark, and never consider the Gospel of John, but they are reading the gospel of you—they are watching you, listening to you, and observing you. They are getting their ideas of Christ and of God from what they hear and see in you.

A number of years ago I was down in Ganado, Arizona, visiting a Presbyterian mission. In the hospital there was a poor Navajo woman who had been desperately ill but had been nursed back to life and health through the Christian missionary doctor and nurses. She was a poor Indian woman who had been cast out by her own people when they thought she was going to die. She had been thrown behind a clump of brush and left there for three or four days. It was the middle of August when the heat is terrific during the daytime and the nights become bitterly cold. There she lay without food or drink, suffering terribly. This missionary doctor found her, brought her to the hospital, and did everything that Christian love and surgical skill could suggest. At last he brought her back to health.

After nine weeks in the hospital, she began to wonder about the love shown to her and said to the nurse, "I can't understand it. Why did he do all that for me? He is a white man and I am an Indian. My own people threw me out. I can't understand it. I've never heard of anything like this before." The Navajo nurse, a sweet Christian girl, said to her, "You know, it is the love of Christ that made him do that." "What do you mean by the love of Christ? Who is this Christ? Tell me more about Him." The nurse was afraid she would not tell it in the right way and so called the missionary doctor. He sat down

and talked to her, and day by day unfolded the wonderful story.

After a few weeks (for she could take in only a little at a time) the hospital staff thought she understood enough to make her decision. They had a special prayer meeting for her then gathered around her bed and prayed that God by His Spirit would open her blind eyes. Again they told her the story of God's love, and asked, "Can't you trust this Savior? Turn from the idols you have worshiped, and trust Him as the Son of the living God!" She looked at them with her big dark Indian eyes and was silent a long time. Then the door to her room opened and the doctor stepped in. Her face lit up and she said, "If Jesus is anything like the doctor, I can trust Him forever," and she came to Christ. Do you see what had reached her? She had seen divine love manifested in a man. That is what you and I are called to exhibit to the world.

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth [abideth] in us, and his love is perfected in us." The love that was revealed so fully in Jesus is now being revealed in those who have trusted in the risen Christ. They are called to make known to a lost world the same wondrous love that led Him to go to the cross. So the apostle concluded this section by saying, "Hereby know we that we dwell [abide] in him" (1 John 4:13). If we love in this divine way, we abide in Him. You cannot abide in Christ and have hatred in your heart. You cannot abide in Christ and have jealousy in your heart; you cannot have unlovely thoughts and unholy desires. All these break fellowship with the Lord.

"Hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Notice carefully these last

words. Notice what John does not say, and then what he does say. The longer I live the more I am filled with admiration for this wonderful book. It is absolutely perfect. God does not say here that He gives us His Spirit, although He does that at salvation. We would not be Christians if He had not given us His Spirit: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). But He is speaking to people here to whom He has already given His Spirit and is telling them how they can show divine love. "Because he hath given us of his Spirit." What does that mean? He has Himself implanted within us something that He has given us from His Spirit. That is the new nature. His Spirit is that of love, and this is the very essence of the new nature. All you and I have to do is to let the Spirit of God control us and we will manifest the love of Christ. To an unbeliever, this seems like a high standard, and they may say, "I don't see how I could ever live up to this, and what is more, I don't know that I have ever seen a Christian who fully did so." Yes, I know I have failed to live up to Christ's standard, but that is my objective, desire, and aim. It is better to have a high objective and fail to obtain it than to have a low one and meet it. Perhaps you feel you could never be a Christian because you can't live up to divine expectation. An Indian once said to me, "Well, you know what I see in this? Here we are in our sin, and a great abyss is before us. On the other side is Heaven. We must get from our sins over to Heaven. There is a bridge across that chasm, but it is like a razor edge, and I have to walk on that in order to get to Heaven!" On the contrary, Christ Himself has bridged the chasm and will carry us over from sin to salvation, from Hell to Heaven. And in order that we may exhibit the love of Christ, He has given us His divine nature. We are called to receive Christ, and then He gives us

the nature that delights to love. “Whosoever loveth [in this sense] is born of God.”

Perfect Love That Casts Out Fear (1 John 4:14-17)

We have already noticed that the manifestation of divine love is the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. We had Christ presented to us in two different ways in verses 9 and 10. Because we were dead in trespasses and sins, the Father sent the Son that we might live through Him. Because we are guilty on account of our iniquity, God sent His only begotten Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins.

John summed it all up in verse 14: “We [the apostolic company who knew Christ personally] have seen, and do testify [bear witness] that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” Notice again, “The Father sent the Son”—the relationship of Father and Son did not begin after Jesus was born into the world. It existed from all eternity where the Father and the Son lived together in holy fellowship. Christ is the eternal Son. He did not become the Son after He was sent, but “the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

This does not imply, of course, that all men will be saved. It does imply that God has provided a Savior for all men. So the great question between God and man today is not merely the question of our sins but what are we doing with the Lord Jesus Christ?

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). If we have accepted Him and put our trust in Him, then we know Him as Savior. If we reject Him, all His wondrous work is worth nothing as far as we are concerned, and only adds to our

condemnation. But “whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth [abideth] in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). There is no other meeting place between God and man except Christ Jesus. To accept Him as a great teacher does not save. To acknowledge Him as the greatest among the sons of men does not bring deliverance. But to own Him as Son of God—to put one’s trust in Him as Savior, and thus confess Him before men—this alone brings salvation.

You find the word *whosoever* used in John’s writings over and over again. What an all-inclusive word it is! We read in John 3:16, the verse that Luther called the miniature Bible, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is strange that anyone should question the universality of the offer of mercy with a verse like that in the Bible. “Whosoever believeth [hath]”—anyone in any circumstance or condition who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ enters into the present possession of eternal life. And so we read in 1 John, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”

Notice, it is “whosoever shall confess,” not merely whosoever shall profess. There are a great many people who profess that they believe Jesus is the Son of God but they have never trusted Him as such. You cannot confess Him as Son of God until He is your own Savior. You confess the One in whom you have trusted. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). But on the other hand, let us not forget that there is another very solemn “whosoever,” and that is also found in the writings of John,

“Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15). Think of the solemnity of that declaration. It is the same word, *whosoever*.

“Whosoever believeth...[hath] everlasting life,” therefore the believer’s name is inscribed in the book of life. Whosoever refuses to believe, whosoever will not put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, “whosoever” is “not found written in the book of life,” must be banished eternally from the presence of God.

After all the gospel preaching you have listened to, after all the Christian people you have known through the years, are you among those who have never yet definitely received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior? I beg of you not to postpone the settlement of this question for even one hour. Wherever you are, lift your heart to God. Tell Him you are the sinner for whom Christ died. Tell Him you are coming to Him for the salvation which He has provided through His blessed Son. Tell Him you are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior. Then go forth to confess Him before men, for, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him [God abideth in him] and he in God.”

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us”(1 John 4:16). This is the declaration of faith, the declaration of one who has definitely laid hold of the gospel message for himself. “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.” This is the second time that statement is made in this chapter. We have already considered it in verse 8: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” And now here again the Spirit reminds us that “God is love.” This is His very nature. This is the very essence of His being; and “he that [abideth] in love [abideth] in God, and God in him.” There

you have fellowship in the light, according to the nature of God Himself. You cannot have fellowship with Him while harboring malice, unkindness, or hatred in your heart. It is impossible. All those things spring from that old corrupt nature inherited from Adam. But if converted we have received a new nature. We may sometimes forget Him for a while, and malice, envy, unkindness, hatred, and all these evil things spring up anew. But as long as we permit any of these evil things to control our lives, we are not abiding in love, and therefore not abiding in God. We are not living in fellowship with Him. Fellowship can only be enjoyed as we walk in light and in love.

Now that there may be no misunderstanding as to what this love is, John wrote in verse 17, “Herein [hath love with us been perfected], that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” I confess there was a time in my Christian life when I was confused as to what these words really meant. Today, however, I know of no passage of Scripture that gives me greater joy or seems clearer, than this verse. As a young believer, I tried to understand it and gave up in frustration. I was misled by the King James version, and did not notice how beautifully it is corrected in other translations. I studied the words, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment,” and I said to myself, *If boldness in the day of judgment depends on my love being perfect, how can I ever be sure that everything will be right with me on that day?* I was looking within my own heart for perfect love, and as I searched that poor heart, I was always finding something there that was contrary to perfect love. How was I ever going to stand in the day of judgment?

It was like a second conversion when God showed me that perfect love is in another Man altogether. I had been looking for it in myself for six and one-half years until one day God turned me away from myself and said, "Look up!" By faith I saw another Man—the man Christ Jesus—seated in glory at the Father's right hand. God said to me, as it were, "There is perfect love. It is displayed in Christ." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins...And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:9-10,14). At last I understood. Perfect love led Christ to come from the Godhead's fullest glory down to Calvary's depth of woe. Perfect love led Jesus to look at a lost, ruined, guilty world, take all our sins upon Him, and die in our place on a felon's cross.

A line in one of our hymns says, "I lay my sins on Jesus." But we do nothing of the kind. Scripture tells us that when Jesus hung on Calvary's cross, the Lord "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Bliss has written:

What, lay my sins on Jesus,

God's well-beloved Son?

No, 'tis a fact most precious

That God e'en that hath done.

God laid our sins on Jesus when He died on Calvary. He made full atonement, and there perfect love was displayed in all its fullness. Now He is seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. What about my sins? When He hung on the cross my

sins were on Him. Are they on Him now as He sits there? Impossible. He could not have entered Heaven with one sin on Him. Perfect love has settled the sin-question. Perfect love has put my sins away forever, and now we may have “boldness in the day of judgment.” I am not afraid of the day of judgment now. Why not? Because my penalty has been paid—my case has been settled.

I would not be afraid to go into a courthouse to view an important case for I am only a spectator. There is nothing against me. And so I can be bold in the day of judgment because I am there with my Lord. I am not there to be judged. I am a spectator, and not just any spectator, but an associate of the Judge Himself.

Years ago we had a very odd judge out in San Francisco. Tourists going through the city would often be taken to see Judge Campbell's court. One day a group of us were going through the courthouse, and in our party were four distinguished looking ladies. When the judge saw them, he invited them to join him on the judge's seat. They went up and sat with him on the bench. He heard the evidence of the first case and then turned to one of the ladies and said, “I will let you pronounce sentence “I don't know what to do,” she answered. “This offense would get from ten to thirty days,” the judge informed her. “Oh,” she replied, “don't give him more than ten days.” “The lady says you are to have ten days,” the judge announced. Case after case of that kind came up while the ladies were sitting there, but they “had boldness in the day of judgment.” Why? Because they were not being judged. They were associated with the judge. If you are a believer in Christ, when the great white throne is set up, you are going to be

there in association with the Judge. “The world shall be judged by you” (1 Corinthians 6:2), and I will tell you something more, you are going to see the devil, who has caused you so much trouble throughout the years, bound in chains and brought to your feet to know what you want done with him. The Bible says, “We shall judge angels” (6:3). The lost angels will receive their sentence of judgment from the people of God. No wonder the apostle Paul said, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20). Yes, we have boldness in the day of judgment because perfect love has settled the sin question.

Jesus said in John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” I like the Roman Catholic translation of that verse. The rendering of the Douay Bible is, “Amen, amen, I say unto you, He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.” Isn’t that a wonderful message? It is enough to settle the sin question forever for anyone who believes. The person who knows Christ has eternal life here and now. He does not hope to have it eventually, but has it now, and shall never come into judgment, but is already passed out of death into life.

Look at the rest of 1 John 4:17, “As he is, so are we in this world.” Some of the greatest truths in the Word of God are packed into the shortest and simplest sentences. Sometimes when preachers want to impress their audiences, they use theological words that make things sound profound. One time a preacher was speaking in such a way that no one could

understand the meaning, and a man spoke up and said, “Brother, put the cookies on the lower shelf so the children can reach them.” Spurgeon used to say, “The Lord said, ‘Feed My sheep,’ but some ministers have the idea that He said, ‘Feed My giraffes.’ They put things so high that few can attain to them.”

Here is one of the most profound truths of Scripture, and it is embodied in nine monosyllables, only three of which have more than two letters. “As he is, so are we in this world.” Nine monosyllables, and yet how profound. I used to think that this verse meant that “as he is, so ought we to be in this world.” I thought we were to aim for perfection—to be like Christ—and even if we could not hit it, it was better than aiming at something lower. But that is not what this verse means. Then I thought it must be, “As he is, so shall we be when we get out of this world and get safe home to Heaven.” But that is not what the verse says either. Instead, it means exactly what it says, as Scripture always does. “As he is [as Christ is] so are we in this world.” How are we like Christ? We are as He is in relation to *judgment*. When Christ died on Calvary for my sin, that was the judgment day. Christ settled everything for me that day. Now God has raised Him from the dead and taken Him to His own right hand, and there He sits exalted. Christ will never again come under judgment. Likewise, right here and now we have the testimony of the Word of God that we are just as secure from judgment as He is because we are accepted in Him.

So near, so very near to God,

I could not nearer be;

For in the person of His Son

I am as near as He.

So dear, so very dear to God,

Dearer I could not be;

The love wherewith He loved His Son,

Such is His love to me.

What an incentive to live for Him! What an incentive to yield our lives as a living sacrifice since He in grace has settled the whole question of our justification, our acceptance with God, and our immunity from judgment!

Made Perfect in Love (1 John 4:18-21)

We have noticed that perfect love is something that is not natural to us. No Christian, no matter how devoted or how mature, has ever on his own exhibited perfect love. There is always some selfishness, jealousy, envy, or self-seeking in the heart of every child of God. Sometimes people imagine that they have gotten beyond all this, but circumstances soon bring out the fact that they have not. When we look for perfect love, we find it only in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was manifested when He gave Himself on the cross for guilty sinners such as ourselves. It is the contemplation of this love that banishes all our fear.

“There is no fear in love” (4:18). If it were a question of our own love, then every honest Christian would be continually in fear if he thought that his final acceptance depended on his own inward perfection in love. But, thank God, we are turned away from ourselves and from our experiences and directed to the full revelation of perfect love in the cross. There you see love triumphant. Love expressed in all its fullness, reached down to

the deepest depths and lifted up poor sinners utterly lost and ruined and undeserving. You can be sure He will never give you up. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

“There is no fear in love.” Watch a little child who really believes that you love him with all your heart and see how trustful that little one is. If you believe that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” how can you ever fear that you may perish? How can you dread being shut out of Heaven, for “perfect love casts out fear?”

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” This word *torment* is used elsewhere in Scripture. It speaks of a grief—a form of pain and anguish caused by spiritual and mental distress—which unsaved men and women have in this life, and which will go on eternally if they leave this world in their sins. The Scriptures plainly teach that if men and women die in their sins, they are going to suffer consciously under the judgment of God for all eternity. This should move our hearts to weep over lost men and women as the Lord did when He said, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). We read in Matthew that “these shall go away into everlasting punishment” (25:46), and, “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). There is no hint that their suffering will ever come to an end. But now having said that, I want to say that while the Word of God plainly teaches the eternal *punishment* of Christ-rejecters, it never even so much as hints at the eternal *torture* of lost men. I say that because I think it is well

that we should keep God's character clear. There is nothing vindictive about God. He has no desire to inflict any unnecessary pain or anguish on men, so Scripture never speaks, as preachers sometimes do, of eternal torture. God will never torture men, nor will He permit the devil to torture them. He will never permit demons to torture them, and they will not be allowed to torture one another.

Hell is not a kind of pandemonium where wicked men and lost angels torture one another and sin against God for all eternity. It is God's well-ordered prison house where men who never behaved before will have to behave at last, and where "every knee shall bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). Satan will not torture men, and he will not reign as king in Hell. He will be the most miserable being there. Hell was created for the devil and his angels, and it is his prison, where he will be in the lowest depths of the lake of fire, suffering for the sins he has committed throughout the ages. And so, every man will be judged according to his own sin and will suffer according to his own transgression. No statement is ever made in the Bible of the torture of lost souls. But while Scripture never teaches torture, it does teach the eternal torment of men who die unrepentant.

I know that our English words *torment* and *torture* come from the same Latin root, which means "to writhe and twist in anguish," but *torture* suggests the infliction of physical suffering, and *torment* is used for the suffering of the mind. "Fear hath torment." You know the awful anguish of mind that fear can throw you into. Here is a man who has shut his eyes to the perfect love of God, refused to believe the gospel

testimony, and he sees rising before him the great white throne. He knows he must answer for his sins. He is rightfully filled with fear, and “fear hath torment.” If that man refuses to bow in repentance before God, and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, and goes out of this life spurning the grace of God, then he goes out to be tormented forever. I think the most awful torment that can come to a lost soul in Hell will be to think of days gone by, to remember mercies rejected, to meditate on grace despised, and cry in the anguish of his soul, “Jesus died for me, and I knew all about it. He shed His precious blood for sinners, and I heard about it over and over again. He died for me, and I rejected Him. I rejected His mercy, and here I am shut away from the light and joy of God for all eternity, and it is my own fault. I might have been saved from the penalty for my sins, but I refused to trust the Savior that God provided and now His wrath rests on me forever.” I cannot imagine anything worse. This anguish of soul and mind, as I understand it, will be the very essence of the torment that lost men and women must endure for eternity.

We remember the word of Abraham to that once-rich man, “Son, remember!” (Luke 16:25). All is wrapped up in that word, *remember*—remember for all eternity! Psychologists tell us that we never forget anything that we have ever known; it is all stored away in our minds. We may think we have forgotten, but things will come to the surface when we least expect them. They come to mind even when we are not thinking of them. So it will be with men in a lost eternity. Every sin, every iniquity, every transgression, and every disobedience will come to remembrance, and will remain throughout all the ages to come. Men will remember the follies of this life and

how foolishly they treated God's offer of mercy. "Son, remember!"

For the righteous, the word *remember* also has its place. We read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2). Memory for the child of God is a blessed thing! Memory for the lost soul is a fearful thing! If you are still unsaved, I pray you will accept the perfect love manifested in the cross. Then all your fears will be dissipated, your torment will disappear, and your heart will sing, He "loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). This is the love that casts out fear.

John continued, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Imagine a group of students in a Latin class. They know that next Monday there is to be an exam. All day Saturday some of them cram and endeavor to get ready for the test. Even on Sunday their minds are not quiet. Their fear tells us that they are not made perfect in Latin, and they know that they are not. They would not be cramming or worrying if they knew their lesson. Suppose there is another student in the class, a bright young girl who is neither cramming nor worried. One of the others meets her and says, "Don't you realize you have a Latin examination on Monday?"

"Yes."

"Well, aren't you worried?"

"Not at all."

"Why aren't you anxious?"

"Because I have been studying every day. I am thankful to have a good memory. It is all stored away, and so I am not afraid."

The one who is perfect in Latin is not afraid. The one who is not perfect in Latin is afraid. If we are made perfect in love, we have learned our lesson and our fear is gone. It is not my love that keeps; it is His love.

Now we come to the practical side in verse 19, and I am going to remove a word from the text in the King James version, for if you will consult the Greek you will find that one word does not appear. It is omitted in all the older manuscripts. The correct rendering is, "We love, because he first loved us." Maybe some of you feel that you have lost something. You like to read, "We love *him*, because he first loved us." But think it over, and you will see how much more precious the correct translation is after all. It is easy to talk about loving Christ and loving God, and yet be cold and unkind and discourteous toward those for whom Jesus died. The test of whether we really love Him is found in the way we behave toward His people, and what a test that is! You say you love Him, but you do not love Him any more than you love the child of God of whom you think the least. Think of that cantankerous, ill-tempered person who always seems to upset you, and yet who you know belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not love Christ any more than you love that person, and so "we love, because he first loved us."

When our hearts are occupied with His wonderful love, we remember that He loved us when we were unlovely, and some of us are not very lovely now. We remember that He loved us when we were unlovable, and some of us are not very lovable yet. If He could love us when we were rebellious, and if that same love is now filling our hearts, we ought to be able to love

those who are sinful and unkind and selfish. It is love triumphing over evil. "We love, because he first loved us."

Here is the last of the tests that John brings before us: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (4:20) John used very strong language sometimes. A great many people have a wrong idea of the apostle John. Many of the ecclesiastical pictures present him as a fair and effeminate-looking individual, rather than a real vigorous man. He was probably a young man about eighteen years old when he and his brother James came to Christ, for John was the youngest of the disciples. As the Lord looked at those two brothers, James and John, in their earnest youth, He said in effect, "I am going to give you another name, I am going to call you Boanerges, the sons of thunder." All of his life John was true to that name given by Jesus. Long after Paul and Peter and all the rest of the disciples had died, John was still ministering the Word at Ephesus, and afterward he was sent to Patmos because of his faithfulness in witnessing for Christ. He died about A.D. 96, and at that time he was an aged man and could look back to the days of his youth when he walked with Jesus. There was nothing effeminate about John.

On one occasion as they were going through Samaria James and John were so stirred up by the action of the Samaritans that they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54) You see the Samaritans at first were desirous to have Jesus with them, but when they noticed that He was anxious to get on to Jerusalem, they would have nothing to do

with Him. They did not know that He was eager to go there in order to die for them. They thought He was not interested in them but only in the people at Jerusalem, and so they did not want Him. And because of this John and his brother wanted to destroy them. But Jesus said to James and John, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of (9:55). There was nothing gentle about wanting to call fire down from heaven! John was not an effeminate kind of a young man. He was strong, vigorous and red-blooded.

Notice the strong language John used. Turn back to 1 John 2:4, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” In verse 22 of the same chapter we read, “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” And now in verse 20 of chapter 4, John used no fancy words but said, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” The way you treat your brother is the test as to whether you really love God.

“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (4:21). If you do not keep His commandments, you are not walking in obedience to His Word. “A new commandment I give unto you...that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). We also need to remember the command, “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Think of this the next time you feel provoked with somebody. Say to yourself, “How often I have grieved the Holy Spirit, but He loves me still. How often I have provoked the Lord to anger, but He loves me still. How often I have dishonored the Father, but He loves me still. Dear

God, by Your Holy Spirit let that same divine all-conquering love be poured into my heart. May I never think of myself but of others for whom Christ has died, and be ready to give myself in devoted, loving service for their blessing." This is Christianity in practice.

1 John, Chapter 5: God Is Life

Overcoming the World (1 John 5:1-5)

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him” (5:1). This verse continues the theme found in the closing verses of the former chapter, where we read, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar” (4:20).

Who is our brother? Some people have the idea that our brethren are those who happen to belong to the same denomination. If I belong to one certain church, my brothers are those who go to that church. In other words, if I am a Methodist, my brothers are Methodists. If I am a Presbyterian, my brothers are Presbyterians. If I am a Baptist, my brothers are Baptists. Our poor minds are inclined to narrow down the family of God to some special fellowship. But in 1 John 5 the Lord Himself gives the limits of the family when He says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” Our brothers are those who in every place have exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The statement, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ,” is not merely an intellectual acceptance of the fact that Christ is the Son of the living God, but rather a true, vital confidence—a personal faith in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the anointed One of God. If you have faith in Him, you are born of God. All who trust in Him enter into this relationship. It is not a question of who you associate with or what church you attend, for there is only one great assembly—the body of Christ—which God Himself recognizes as His church. When we speak of church membership, we are usually referring to a local

fellowship, but when the Word of God speaks of church membership, it is referring to the vast company of believers over whom Christ is the glorified Head in Heaven. Every believer belongs to that church. Our brothers include the whole church of God and our love must go out to them all.

There is no use talking about loving the Father if you do not love the Father's children. There is no use talking about our devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ if we are not devoted to those for whom He died. Love is a very real and practical thing. We often speak sentimentally of loving the people of God, but how do we show it? What form does our love take? Scripture says that love "suffereth long, and is kind; [love] envieth not; [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7). Take some of these simple statements and test your own love to find where you stand. Are you envious of any of God's people? When honor comes to others that does not come to you, do you rejoice with them? Scripture says, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). When people are saying good things about someone else and not saying them about you, does your heart rejoice in that? Are you thankful to see others honored and exalted, even though you may be passed over? Real love of others will lead to that very thing. It will always endeavor to put others first.

Love is active. It seeks to serve and delights to minister. Are you trying to serve the people of God or are you someone who loves to be served? Some Christians are always wanting others to do for them, while other Christians are always trying to do

for others. The people who are constantly looking for attention are never happy. They are always feeling hurt and slighted. But how different with those who are showing the love of Christ! Someone once said to me, "When I go to such and such a church, I find they are very cold. I never see any love exhibited." I replied, "Do you ever show any?" He looked at me and said, "Well, perhaps not as much as I should." Standing next to him was a woman who attended the same place. "How do you find them down there?" I asked her. "Are they cold?" "Why," she said, "I think they are the most loving and affectionate group of Christians I have ever seen." She was showing love to them, and was getting love in return. You usually find what you are looking for.

A while ago I read of a man who spent a few months in India. When he came back, he was discussing India at the home of some of his friends, and the talk drifted to missions. This man, out of his wide experience of about five months in India said, "I have no use for missions and missionaries. I spent five months there, and didn't see that they were doing anything. In fact, in all that time I never met a missionary. I think the church is wasting its money on missions." A quiet old gentleman spoke up and said, "Pardon me, how long did you say you were in India?"

"Five months."

"What took you there?"

"I went out to hunt tigers."

"And did you see any tigers?"

"Scores of them."

“It is rather peculiar,” said the old gentleman, “but I spent thirty years in India, and in that time I never saw a tiger but I saw hundreds of missionaries. You went to India to hunt tigers and you found them. I went to India to do missionary work and found many other missionaries.”

Love is a practical thing—“Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” Scripture also says, “Love covereth all sins” (Proverbs 10:12). And again, “[Love] shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). In the King James version the word *charity* is better translated *love*. These verses mean that if you know your brother or your sister has failed—if you know of some sin, even some grievous sin that has come into their lives—you will never mention it to anyone but God. If you really love them, you will go to them first and try to help them recover. “Love covereth all sins.” You will never be a talebearer. You will never be a gossip. You will never go around talking against your brother. When you know of anything wrong, you will go to God about it. When you talk to other people against your brother, you only spread things that hurt others, but when you go to God, the Holy Spirit of God can, in answer to your prayer, begin to work in the heart and conscience of the wrong-doer. He will be brought to repentance or be broken down under the discipline of the Lord. Love in all its fullness will lead you to go to that brother and tenderly, graciously, and kindly seek to help him in his trouble. You will lovingly point out the wrong, offer to pray with him, and leave it with God if he bows in repentance before Him.

There is a beautiful picture in the Old Testament which illustrates this point. Among the furnishings of the tabernacle

was a candlestick. The Lord told Moses to make a golden candlestick with seven lamps. The candle was really an olive oil lamp with a wick. The wick would burn just so long, and then turn over charred and blackened, needing to be trimmed. The snuffers and the snuff dishes were made of pure gold (Exodus 25:31-40). What is important about snuffers and snuff dishes? Well, you see if a lamp is going to shine brightly, it needs to be snuffed or trimmed sometimes, and if I want to burn brightly for Christ, there will be many a time when I have to judge myself in the presence of God, or I will be just like the burned wick that obscured the light. The Old Testament priest was to go in and trim the lamp using a golden snuffer. Gold in Scripture speaks of that which is divine, so the believer who reproves his brother is to go to him in fellowship with God. I may be able to help my brother if I go in tenderness and grace. What did the priest do with the wicks when he trimmed them away? Did he scatter them around, get them on his robe and hands, and go around defiling the garments of other priests? No. He was to take that dirty black snuff, put it in a golden snuff dish, and cover it up so that it would not defile anyone else. That is what love does. You do not spread around your brother's failures, but you show real love by covering them up in the presence of God. That is love in a practical sense.

First John 5:2 suggests something more. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." What an interesting book the Bible is! First, John said, that we know we love God because we love the brethren. Then he said we know we love the brethren when we love God. It seems like circular reasoning, but God is above all our rules of logic. In God's eyes the two are inseparable. If we love God, we love the children of God also. If we love the

children of God, we love God and keep His commandments. Love is faithful. It does not make light of sin. It does not seek to excuse evil. It leads us to put the truth of God first and to bring all else into subjection to it.

I do not love my brother when I condone his wrong-doing, or agree (for the sake of peace) to what is in direct opposition to the command of God. Take the question of divorce and remarriage. There may be circumstances where people have to be separated, but if so, they are to remain unmarried (unless divorced for clear scriptural reasons), and yet what a lot of preachers there are who marry people who have been divorced contrary to the Word of God. Some ministers may say, "I love these people so much I don't want to hurt their feelings." But love does not help them to do something that is contrary to the Word of God. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Real Christian love exhibits itself when we put the will of God first and seek to show love to His people, according to His Word, and lead our brethren in the path of obedience to that Word.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (5:3). But someone might say, "That's all very well, but I find it awfully hard to do some things that God wants me to do." If I felt that way, I would begin to wonder whether I were really born again. If unsaved you have only one nature, and that nature hates the things of God. When you are born again, you have a new nature, and you ought to glory in the will of God. You will do so if you are walking in the power of the Spirit. If you are a Christian and do not find delight in the will of God, it is

because you are grieving the Holy Spirit. There is something in your life that is dishonoring the Lord, and so you have lost your joy. Judge everything in your life that is contrary to the Word of God, and you will be surprised to find how sweet His will is. “His commandments are not grievous.”

“For whatsoever is born of God [the new nature, the new life which is communicated to you] overcometh the world” (5:4). It is a blessed fact that every true believer will be an overcomer at the last. But some of us, like Jacob, will never be overcomers until we are almost at the end of life. Jacob had been a child of God for many years, but it was not until he was down to the very end that he manifested the graces that God was seeking to work in him throughout all those years. Then we read, “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff (Hebrews 11:21). By faith when he was dying, he was brought to the place of an overcomer. What a pity to have lost all that time. What a pity if you and I should be so set on having our own way that we lose out through the years—years that can never be recalled.

What does it mean to overcome the world? “All that is in the world” is described in verse 16 of the second chapter of this Epistle—“the lust of the flesh,” which is carnal indulgence of any kind; “the lust of the eyes,” or the pleasures of the senses; and “the pride of life,” ambition and struggling after fame and praise in the world. These are the things that constitute “the world.” Some Christians have the idea that worldliness consists of going to the theater, playing cards, dancing, taking part in certain worldly pleasures. No doubt these satisfy one form of worldliness—the lust of the flesh and perhaps the lust of the

eye. But you may never have crossed the threshold of a theater, you may never sit down at the card table, you may never have been on the dance floor in your life, and yet you may be just as worldly as the people who do these things. The lover of money is as worldly as the lover of pleasure or fame or ambition. The one who is trying to crush others and push himself to the front is just as worldly as the man who spends half the night at the theater. Don't think that you can, as Samuel Butler said, "compound for sins (you) are inclined to by damning those (you) have no mind to." Overcoming the world means being delivered from the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." As you obey the desires of the new nature you are set free from the world, because this new life finds delight in the things of God.

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Seven times over in Revelation we hear the Lord say to the seven churches, "To him that overcometh." He is not singling out a superior class of Christians, but is saying that in every age Christians will be overcomers. By faith they will finally overcome the world in every instance.

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (5:5) Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? It is not merely accepting a statement of creed, but it is trust in the blessed Son of God. It is trust that He went to Calvary's cross, and there shed His precious blood to put away your sins. Have you trusted Him? Have you believed on Him? Peter wrote, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever...And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23, 25). When you believe the

message of the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your personal Savior, then you are born of God. You are given a new nature, and your faith is manifested by love. Whatever failures, struggles, or temptations you may have to meet, you will come through triumphant at last because it is God who will bring you through. It is not a question of your own power or steadfastness, but you are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

The Three Witnesses (1 John 5:6-13)

We have three witnesses presented to us in this section. Contrary to how it may appear in the King James version we do not have six witnesses in this chapter—three in Heaven and three on earth. In the King James version, verse seven reads, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” This verse is not found in any critical translation of the New Testament. My statement may trouble some and cause you to question the dependability of Scripture. Let me try to explain, very briefly.

You must remember that the Bible was translated into English from Hebrew and Greek sources. The Hebrew and Greek were hand written and came down through the centuries, copied first by one scribe and then by another. It is quite possible for one man writing a manuscript to insert or to leave something out. It is possible for something to be put in the margin of one manuscript which the next scribe may assume belongs to the text. The oldest Greek manuscripts from which the King James version was taken were probably written in the twelfth century. Since then literally thousands of manuscripts have come to light from as far back as the end of the second and

the beginning of the third century, and in none of them are these words found. They probably got in because some scribe made a comment on the margin of his manuscript, and someone copying it thought the words belonged to the text, and so inserted them.

In 1 John 5:6 we read, “This is he [that is, the Lord Jesus Christ spoken of in verse 5], that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Then verse 8 reads, “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” What does the apostle mean when he speaks of these three that bear witness or testimony? To what do they give testimony? They testify to the effectiveness of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The three witnesses are the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

The Spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit of God who, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, came from Heaven to dwell in the church on earth. He came to empower those proclaiming the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a vast difference between merely explaining doctrine and preaching the gospel in the Spirit’s power. Anyone can do the former, and everything said might be true, but there is no power in it. Preaching the gospel in the energy of the Holy Ghost is another thing altogether, and therefore we read, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Jesus said, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the

uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit, then, is a witness to the effectiveness of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. He has come down from Heaven to assure us that Christ’s sacrifice has been accepted for us.

The other witnesses are the water and the blood. In John’s Gospel we are told that they broke the legs of the thieves who hung on either side of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they came to Jesus, they marveled because He was already dead, and so they did not break His legs, for it was written, “A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:36). Instead one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and, John writes, “Forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:34). That made a great impression on the mind of John as he saw those two elements mingled and flowing from the wounded side of the Savior.

Years later when John wrote this Epistle to the children of God, he said, “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” (1 John 5:6). Why does he draw our attention to the water and the blood which flowed from the side of the Son of God? In these two elements we have suggested two characters of cleansing.

As a sinner I learn that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. But that cleansing is judicial—that is my cleansing before God. When God looks at me as a believer, He sees me cleansed from every stain by the blood of His Son. But that cleansing alone does not satisfy me. As a Christian, I want to know practical deliverance from the power of sin. I am not content to know that my sins have been put under the blood if I find that I am still living under the power of sin. I want sin to be taken away practically—I want to be set free, to be cleansed

from the things that curse my life—and I find practical cleansing through the “washing of water by the word.” We read in Ephesians 5:25-26, “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” The Word of God applied to my heart and conscience sets me free from sin as a habit. I am delivered from its power. A Christian poet wrote:

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and power.

Augustus M. Toplady

The blood cleanses from sin’s guilt. The water of the Word applied in the power of the Holy Spirit cleanses from the defilement of sin. So then these are the three witnesses: *the blood* witnesses that the sin question is settled to God’s satisfaction; *the Word* witnesses that there is power to deliver from sin in a practical way; *the Spirit* bears witness that this power is for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“If we 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” (1 John 5:9). Men come to us and tell of things we have never seen, and we believe them. They make us promises that we believe. The entire commercial system of the world depends largely on the witness of men. Companies make certain promises, and because we trust them we go ahead and do business with them. If we are willing to trust our fellow men who may fail to keep their promises, and whose word may prove unreliable, surely we can say, “The witness of God is

greater.” God has given us the witness of His Word, and His witness can be relied on, because it is impossible for God to lie.

“For this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.” God in His Word has given a testimony concerning His Son. He has told us that the Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). This is God’s witness, and He calls on us to believe it.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the [witness] that God gave of his Son” (1 John 5:10). The witness is not a question of feeling happy, or of a great emotional experience. Neither is it a question of “getting religious,” but it is a question of believing God and receiving His Word in your heart. When you do that, you have the witness in yourself, and the Spirit of God makes it real to you. When asked, “Are you saved?” you may answer, “Yes.” If someone inquires, “How do you know?” you say, “Because God has told me so.” You don’t know you are saved because you feel happy. You feel happy because you know you are saved. People often put the cart before the horse. They look for feelings of happiness as a testimony that they are saved, when they must first believe the Word. Then the joy will follow.

Alex Marshall, the Scottish evangelist, went as a young boy to a circus where an evangelist was preaching. As he sat in the balcony, he felt the need to be saved, but thought to himself, “If I could only get the happy feeling that some of these people have, I would know if it were real.” Often the Spirit of God

gives a preacher just the right message for someone in the audience, and this preacher leaned over the pulpit, pointed to where Alex sat and said, “Young man, believing is the root, feeling is the fruit.” At that moment Alex Marshall understood, believed, and passed out of death into life. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” Take God at His word and say, “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4). You can rest on His Word.

Others may have believed on Christ but have no assurance of salvation because they are waiting for a feeling—waiting for the witness. This is what God says, “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” As long as your assurance depends on a feeling, you are making God a liar. God has told you something that He asks you to believe. What does it imply if you don’t believe? Suppose I told you something and you said, “Yes, well, I would like to believe you. I am even trying to believe you, but somehow I just cannot believe you.” What would that mean? It would imply that you really thought I was lying to you. It is just the same when you fail to believe what God has said in His Word.

“He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:12). God’s Word says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). You might believe that you are saved, and not be saved at all. But you cannot believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him as your Savior without being saved. When you lack the assurance of salvation after putting your trust in Him, you make God a liar, because you do not believe “the record that God gave of His Son.”

A friend of mine who died some years ago in India did not have the assurance of salvation. The thing that troubled him above everything else was that he believed that God had chosen an elect few that should be saved. As he had no evidence that he was among them, he could not know that he was saved. He went to a meeting where the preacher declared that a man was saved the moment he believed in Jesus, that he possessed eternal life, and that he could never perish. He wanted to have the same assurance. When he got home, he got down on his knees and prayed, "O God, if it is possible for a man to be sure he has eternal life, show it to me now from Your Word. But if it is not possible, show me that, and I will leave it with You." He turned to 1 John chapter 5. When he came to verse 10 he read, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "I don't want to make God a liar," he said, "but I don't know what that record is." Then he read verse 11, "And this is the record." He put his thumb down on the rest of the verse, and shut his eyes and prayed, "O God, I have just been reading that if a man does not believe the record that You have given of your Son, he makes You a liar; I don't want to make You a liar, but I don't know what the record is. I suppose I have it under my thumb. I am going to lift my thumb, and when I do, help me to believe whatever I find there, because I don't want to make You a liar." He almost dreaded to lift his thumb, but finally did, and read, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "Oh," he said, "Blessed be God! Right here and now I can know!" His faith was confirmed as he read, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (5:12). He saw that salvation was a matter of receiving Christ. Assurance of salvation was a matter of

believing God's Word. His heart found peace, and for years he preached this same truth to others.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12). Have you received Christ? Then, "He that hath the Son hath life." Are you rejecting Him? "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." If you have not received the Son of God by faith as your Savior you are still dead in your sins. But if you have received Him as your Savior, God says you have everlasting life. Take Him at His word.

"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). John was not speaking of an intellectual belief. Do you have faith in the Son of God? Do you trust in Him? Listen, then; I have a message for you, and I wish I could drive it home to every heart with power. Suppose a letter came addressed, "To you who believe on the name of the Son of God." The courier announces, "I have a letter, and if the person to whom it is addressed is here, please come and claim it. It is addressed to 'You who believe.'" What would you say? Do you believe on the name of the Son of God? Is the letter for you? Very well, then, open it and see what it says. "That ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life, [even you who] believe on the name of the Son of God." It is a message from Heaven to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you been doubting the assurance of your salvation? Are you "sometimes up and sometimes down," yet hoping all the while that you are Heaven-bound, but not very sure of it? Get

it settled today. Put away your doubts and fears, and look by faith at the risen Christ. Take it from God Himself that “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36).

Faith's Confidence (1 John 5:14-21)

In these closing verses we have three major sections. First, John spoke of the confidence of faith, and of prayers heard and answered. Second, he gave a warning to those who sin unto death. And finally, in verses 18 to 21, the apostle summarized the teaching of the entire Epistle.

In verses 14 and 15 we read, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” The ordinary word for confidence in the New Testament is the same Greek word that is generally *translated faith*, but the word used here is a different one. The apostle was not simply saying, “This is *the faith* that we have in him,” or “This is the *trust* that we have in him,” but he used a word that literally means *boldness*. “This is the *boldness* that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.”

What a bold thing it is for a man or a woman, once a sinner condemned to die under the judgment of God, to dare to come into the presence of the infinite God, bringing the petitions of his heart. What boldness to know that if we bring these to Him, inasmuch as they are in accordance with His will, “he heareth us.” This is a boldness that the world cannot understand. Men and women who do not know Christ ask, Do you think that your puny prayers and petitions are going to change the mind of divine Omnipotence, and that the infinite

God is going to listen to the pleadings of a poor finite creature of the dust? Abraham felt like that, and yet boldly came to God and said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). And because he came in faith and in accordance with the will of God, his prayer was heard. Today we who know Him as Savior have this boldness, and so we come to Him knowing that "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

How do we know if our petition is in accordance with His will? This is a very important question. For a prayer to be in accordance with the *will* of God, it must first of all be in accordance with the *Word* of God. I might pray earnestly, but my pleadings will never be heard if they are contrary to the Word of God. On the other hand I might pray in accordance with the Word of God, but if I am not living in the will of God my prayer will still go unanswered, for "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). The Lord tells us, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Under such circumstances, God's will becomes our will, and so as we ask according to His will, we know He hears us. "And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask [that is, of course, whatsoever we ask in accordance with His will], we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

We may not get the answer to our petitions immediately. But if we ask in accordance with the will of God, and if we are in fellowship with God as we bring the petition, we may be definitely assured that He has heard and has answered, and that sometime, somewhere, we will see the answer. Of course, we have to remember our human limitations, for we do not

always know what is wisest or best. Therefore we must be prepared to find that the answer sometimes comes in a way we least expect.

There was a Christian man who was the only survivor from a wrecked vessel after a storm at sea. He found himself on a small island, and by great effort managed to make a little shelter from the equatorial storms. He waited day after day praying for God to send a ship to rescue him. He used to go down to the shore of the island and wave a piece of his clothing every time he saw a ship passing in the distance, but they never saw him. One day as he was cooking his dinner, he spotted a ship some distance away and hurried to the shore, earnestly praying that this time they might see him and come to his relief. He waved frantically, but to no avail. Returning to his hut he was astonished to see that it had burst into flames. The wind had caught some embers and set the place on fire. Everything burned. He stood there utterly distressed, not knowing where he would be able to gather sufficient material to build another shelter. However, to his amazement, he noticed that the vessel he had seen earlier was headed straight for the island. As they neared the shore they sent a boat for him and took him on board. "Did you see me waving?" he asked. "Waving!" they replied; "We saw your smoke, and so we came to rescue you." God had answered his prayer, but not at all in the way he expected it. Someday when we get home to Heaven, we will see that many of the prayers we thought God had not heard were answered in His own wonderful way.

What about faith healing? If we pray for the sick, will they be healed? Yes, if it is His will. But sometimes it is not. While on earth, Jesus healed all the sick that came to Him, but that is

not how He works today. It is true that the Lord is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is an unchanging Savior, but His methods are not always the same. When He was here on earth He raised the dead, but He is not raising the dead now. However, when He returns, He will raise the dead and prove that His power is the same now as when He was on earth.

In verse 16 we read, “If any man see his brother [referring to a child of God] sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.” The implication clearly is that sometimes—not always, but sometimes—sickness comes to the children of God as divine chastening. It is a means of correction and discipline because of waywardness. Sometimes the discipline has the desired effect in the spiritual restoration and the body is healed. But other times it does not seem to be the will of God to restore the disciplined believer. “There is sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (5:16). Of course it is physical death that John referred to, not eternal death. He is not speaking of the death of the soul, but of the death of the body under divine discipline. The indefinite article in this part of the verse should be omitted. It is not that there is some specific sin that always results in death, but there is *sin unto death*.

Moses and Aaron sinned unto death when they became angry with the children of Israel and struck the rock in anger instead of speaking to it as they had been commanded. The Lord said, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Numbers 20:12). Now Moses had immediate repentance and restoration

to fellowship. He pleaded with God that He would forgive him and permit him to enter the land, but the Lord said, "Speak no more unto me of this matter" (Deuteronomy 3:26). Moses had sinned unto death. If today every time Christians got angry they sinned unto death, how few of us would be here! I'm afraid most of us would be at home in Heaven. Why then was He so severe with Moses? Moses was one who spoke with God face to face, and with greater privilege comes greater responsibility. Don't forget that.

Turning to the New Testament, we find the Spirit of God was working in great power in the early church. Among the professed converts were two, Ananias and Sapphira. They sinned against the Holy Ghost by pretending to have a devotion to God that they did not possess. When they were faced with the sin, they told a lie. The result was that first Ananias and then Sapphira his wife fell down dead. They had sinned unto death. If God were dealing with all Christians that way today, there would be few believers still here. How many Christians have never permitted others to think that they were holier than they really are? And is there a believer who has never been guilty of a lie? Perhaps you have repented, but for Ananias and Sapphira there was no restoration. They had sinned unto death when they pretended to be more spiritual than they were and then lied concerning it.

We find another incident recorded in 1 Corinthians. There was a great deal of laxity and carelessness of behavior at Corinth when they gathered together to take what we call today the communion or the Lord's supper. Because of this laxity and carelessness that marked them, the apostle wrote, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1

Corinthians 11:30). Sleep is a term used throughout the Bible for the believer's death. If every time a Christian took communion carelessly God were to visit with temporal death, how often tragedy would follow the observance of the Lord's supper! We cannot say of any particular sin that it is *the* sin unto death. God gives His people opportunity after opportunity, but if at last they deliberately go on refusing obedience to His Word, He says, "I am going to take you home; I can't trust you in the world any longer. I will deal with you at the judgment seat of Christ."

Imagine a group of children playing in the evening, and eventually a quarrel develops. A mother appears in the doorway and calls to her child, "What's going on here? You behave yourself."

"Yes, Mother. I will try to do better."

"If you don't, you will have to come in." After a while there is a fuss again, and the mother calls out, "You come inside."

"Oh Mother, I'm sorry. We are in the middle of a game. I promise to be good."

"Very well, but you be careful."

The game goes on, and once again there is a quarrel. The mother tells her child, "You come inside now."

"But Mother—"

"Not another word; you come inside."

"But Mother, I will try to behave myself."

"No, I can't trust you anymore tonight. Come inside."

So it is with God and His children here in this world. He gives them many chances because He is wonderfully gracious. After a failure they repent and say, "Now I have learned my lesson." Perhaps a little later the same thing occurs, and God says, "Now I am going to lay My hand on you." Perhaps there is a long siege of illness, and they have an opportunity to bring everything to God in sincere confession, but the Lord says, "You have sinned unto death. I can't trust you anymore, so I am going to take you home."

I knew a young man who left his home in obedience to the call of God to engage in Christian work in a needy district. He had not been there long before an offer of a prosperous job came between him and the Lord. His fiancée declared she would never marry a preacher, and so he decided to take the position. He settled down, made money, and succeeded in his work, but inwardly was always very unhappy. He knew he had sinned against the Lord because he had been called to a different service. Eventually he developed tuberculosis. He gave up his position and spent his savings in a sanitarium, where he lay flat on his back. He sent for me and said, "Brother, I want you to pray with me, but not that the Lord will heal me, unless He should make it very clear to you that it is His will. I have been facing a great many things lately. I see my failure now as never before. I believe I have sinned unto death." I looked to the Lord asking, if it was His will, to heal him, but if not to give him great joy in departing. Two weeks later I saw him again and he said, "I will never see you on earth again. I have had two very wonderful weeks. The Lord has been very near to me, but He has told me that He is going to take me home. I lost my opportunity, and inasmuch as I chose my own comfort instead of His will He can't trust me here any more."

But, thank God, I am perfectly resigned to His will. I am going home!” And, sure enough, three days later he died. He had sinned unto death, and it was useless to pray for his healing, but he went home happy in Christ.

“All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death” (1 John 5:17). All unrighteousness is sin and is therefore distasteful to God, but there are certain circumstances that do not make some conditions quite so serious as others.

In verses 18 to 21 we have the epitome of all that has gone before. This section is divided into three parts. Each part is introduced by the expression, “We know.” The word translated *know* really means “an inward knowledge.” We know not merely because we have read it or heard it, or because someone told us, but we know because of an inward assurance that has come to us. John said, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not [doth not practice sin]; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (5:18). This is another way of saying that the child of God has received a new nature. Even though he falls into sin, he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The accuser of the brethren will not be permitted to lay one charge against them, for they are in the hands of their own Father who will deal with them about their failures.

In the next verse we read, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (5:19). This is sometimes translated, “The whole world lieth in the wicked one.” It may seem like a bold assumption for Christians to say that they have inward knowledge—absolute assurance that they are of God—and that the whole world lieth in the wicked one. Yes, it may seem like assumption to men who do not

know God, but there is a reality about it that cannot be explained to the world.

For instance, a young Christian who has recently come to Christ may be confronted by the specious arguments of atheists, agnostics, and other unbelievers and find that he is unable to answer their questions. They say to him, "See we have proven to you that you are wrong and that God never spoke to men." The young believer looks them full in the face and says, "I don't know how to answer your arguments, but I *know* I have passed from death unto life." A Christian who has been saved out of a life of sin is often unable to explain the transformation that has taken place in his life. But one thing he knows and can boldly claim, "Whereas I was blind now I see. Whereas I was once the victim of sinful habits that were wrecking and ruining my life, now I have found liberty in Christ Jesus." Explain that if you can. Every believer as he walks with God has this blessed inward knowledge. The only believer who loses this knowledge is the one who is disobedient to God. He loses his sense of assurance. But when he comes back to God, makes a frank confession of his failure and is restored, he once again has this blessed inward knowledge given by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 20 reads, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Of course John could speak from actual knowledge, for he had leaned on the breast of the Lord. He had walked with Him for three and a half wonderful years. He had heard the message proceeding out of His mouth, and had seen His works of power. We have

no such evidence, but we know nonetheless, for He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. The same divine life that was revealed in all its fullness in Christ can be part of every believer. And so, “we are in him that is true.”

Having spoken of our Lord Jesus, John immediately added, “This is the true God, and eternal life.” Eternal life is seen personally in Christ and is communicated by Christ to those who believe in Him.

In verse 21 we have the closing exhortation, and though brief, it is an important one: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Anything that comes between your soul and the path of obedience to God is an idol. Sometimes God has to come and take these idols away from us in a way that seems very hard, and we may even charge Him with being cruel. But He takes them away in order that Christ may have His rightful place and our hearts may be entirely devoted to Him. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Scripture says of Jesus Christ, “This is the true God.” Therefore, any god other than the God revealed in Jesus Christ is an idol. In Christ alone is God made fully known.

2 and 3 John: Introductory Notes by Arno C. Gaebele

Introduction

We treat these small documents—2 John and 3 John—together. No intelligent person can doubt that both Epistles were written by the same person. All objections are answered by the ancient authorities who ascribe both books to the writer of the first Epistle—that is, the apostle John. They seem to have been accepted from the very beginning as his inspired testimony.

The internal evidence is also conclusive. Both 2 John and 3 John are in tone, style, and vocabulary like the Gospel of John and 1 John. The characteristic words of the Gospel and 1 John—*love, truth, world*, and so forth—are found in 2 John and 3 John. These two Epistles are indeed complementary to 1 John and present some of the truths contained in the first Epistle in a practical way. The warning contained in 2 John 10 connects closely with the instructions of 1 John 4. There is no question that both 2 John and 3 John are appendixes to 1 John.

2 John

The second Epistle was addressed by “the elder unto the elect lady and her children.” The word “elder” has the same meaning here that it has in 1 Peter 5. Some take it that “the elect lady” means an assembly, and “her children,” the members of the assembly, but this is a very strained application. The word *kyria* (“lady”) excludes this meaning and there are other reasons for rejecting it, but we will not discuss them here.

“The elect lady” was a Christian woman of note, generally known and beloved. She had a sister with children, who seems to have been where the apostle was, probably in Ephesus. This is indicated by the last verse: “The children of thy elect sister greet thee.”

The keynote of this message to “the elect lady,” unknown by name, is the word “truth.” The apostle let her and her children know that he loved them and all other believers in the truth. That is the basis of real love. Every child of God—man, woman, or child—is best beloved for the sake of the truth, the blessed truth so beautifully expounded in 1 John, the truth that is Christ Himself. That truth “dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever” (2 John 2). It binds together in closest fellowship all who know Him.

A greeting follows in 2 John 3: “Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” The expression “the Son of the Father,” which is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, is in full keeping with the object of this little Epistle, for a warning against those who deny “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” is the chief message of the Epistle.

The great joy of the apostle was that he found the lady’s children walking in the truth, according to the commandment received from the Father. Having the truth necessitates walking in the truth. One who claims to have the truth and does not walk in it, shows that he does not know the truth in his heart. Walking in the truth is the result of having and knowing the truth.

The view stated before that 2 John and 3 John are appendixes of 1 John is supported by the comment in 2 John 5 (compare 1

John 3:23). To “love one another” is the old and the new commandment. It is old because it was demonstrated in Christ Himself; it is new because it is just as true in us as in Him. Divine love reproduces itself in all who know the truth—that is, who know Christ. “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments” (2 John 6). Walking “after his commandments” means obedience to Him, and what else is obedience but love in action?

But why did the apostle write all this? In verse 7 he gave the reason and it is a very solemn one indeed: “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” This was true in the beginning of the age, and all through the present dispensation the old serpent has made repeated attempts to attack Christ and foster lies concerning His person and glory, but such attacks have never been as evident as they are today. The reason is that the age is about to end.

In these closing days people are denying Christ’s essential deity, His true humanity, His virgin birth, His infallibility, His holy character, His physical resurrection, and His bodily presence in glory. Many such antichrists are around. John branded them in plain speech as “deceivers.” No matter what names they have, what scholarship and honors they claim, what beautiful characters they have assumed as natural men, if they deny anything about Christ, they are deceivers.

In his second letter John was calling for “the elect lady and her children” to look diligently about to see whether some of this awful leaven was affecting them. If they were contaminated with it in any way, he and his fellow teachers might lose the “full reward” (2 John 8; also see 1 John 2:28). Even the smallest

error about the person of Christ is a transgression of the doctrine of Christ and can lead to a complete rejection of the truth, as has so often been seen in the cases of apostates.

The apostle continued in 2 John 9, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” A denier of the doctrine “hath not God,” while he who remains true “hath both the Father and the Son.” After this declaration comes a divine command that is just as binding as any other command in the Word of God: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

This is strong language and yet not too strong when we remember what is at stake. Anyone who denies “the doctrine of Christ”—the doctrine unfolded in 1 John concerning Christ the Son of God coming in the flesh and dying for sinners—is an antichrist. Furthermore such a person makes God a liar, and robs God of His glory and man of his salvation. Every man who denies the virgin birth or teaches the peccability of Christ or denies His physical resurrection must be shunned. Fellowship with him is an impossibility. He is not to be welcomed to any Christian home, nor is he to be given the common greeting. If met anywhere, there is to be no acknowledgment whatever, not even a “Good morning” or “Good night,” for this is the meaning of the expression “God speed.”

Does this sound intolerant? Yes, but it is the intolerance of divine love. If such deceivers are welcomed and fellowship is had with them even in the slightest degree, the believer puts his sanction on a denier of Christ. God will hold all responsible

who fellowship with any man, any set of men, any institution, or anything else that denies His Son and His glory. This is unpalatable to many. Nowadays it is considered a sign of Christian charity and broadmindedness to mingle with Unitarians, critics, and baptized infidels of various descriptions and to push His honor and glory into the background. Happy are we if we stand firm and refuse such fellowship by practicing the divine injunction given by the apostle of love. God will be our rewarder.

3 John

The third Epistle was addressed by “the elder,” the aged apostle John, to a brother in Christ by the name of Gaius. A Gaius is mentioned in Acts 19:29; 20:4; Romans 16:23; and 1 Corinthians 1:14. However, it is impossible to say whether this is the same man. John called him “wellbeloved” and referred to him as one “whom I love in the truth.” Thus the apostle emphasized the truth once more. He wished that Gaius might prosper in his body, even as his soul prospered.

John had heard testimony from other believers that Gaius was walking “in the truth.” The apostle rejoiced in this and declared, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” And this is not only the aged apostle’s joy, but it is the joy of the Lord. How He must rejoice when His beloved children in whom He dwells walk in truth!

Gaius had been very gracious and perhaps those who spoke well of him had been the recipients of his kindness. He had been hospitable not only to the brothers in his assembly, but also to strangers who were ministering servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They told the church how faithful Gaius had been

in entertaining them, helping them on their journey in every way possible.

“For his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles,” because they depended on the Lord. The practice, even among those who preach the truth, of demanding so much money for so much service was unknown in the early church. Nowhere do we read in the New Testament of a salaried ministry. The evils of going to the world for support of the Lord’s work and using the methods of the world are widespread today and detrimental to true faith and to true testimony. The work of the Lord and the servants of Christ are to be supported only by the Lord’s people and not by the unsaved.

Those who go forth “taking nothing of the Gentiles” are to be received; and those who do as Gaius did, receiving them and helping them on their journey, are “fellowhelpers to the truth” and in that coming day will share in the fruit of their labors. This is true fellowship in the truth. As Paul expressed it in Galatians 6:6, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” There is to be identification with those who know the truth and teach the truth. What a contrast to the withdrawal, the complete separation, that there is to be from those who deny the doctrine of Christ!

A bright picture is presented in Gaius, but 3 John is not all good news. There was a man called Diotrephes—his name means “nourished of God”—of whom John said: “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating

against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.”

Diotrephes wanted to be the leader of the assembly, a kind of pope in embryo. He loved the pre-eminence and his self-love and his seeking to maintain his position led him to act so outrageously that he excommunicated some and dared to rise up against the apostle himself. What harm such jealousies, self-seeking, self-glorification, and ecclesiastical bossism have worked and are working in the body of Christ! But why did Diotrephes love to have the pre-eminence? Because, unlike the apostle and the beloved Gaius, he did not give the Lord Jesus Christ the pre-eminence in all things; he did not walk in the truth. When the Lord comes, all such things will be brought to light and dealt with by Him at His judgment seat.

John did not leave us with the sad picture of Diotrephes. The apostle went on to say, “Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” Doing good is the active service of love. God does not do evil; He does good. Therefore if we do good as believers in truth, we are of God. That is the test.

Then John mentioned Demetrius. Perhaps he was one of God’s servants who went about doing good and preaching the truth; perhaps he was one whom Diotrephes would not receive. How blessed that the Holy Spirit through John’s letter endorsed and recommended Demetrius! The apostle wrote, “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.” Such is the comfort of all true servants who walk in the truth.

Conclusion

Both 2 John and 3 John end with the prospect of a “face to face” meeting. Let us remember that some blessed day there is going to be another “face to face” meeting when the saints of God will gather for eternal fellowship and, above all else, we will be face to face with Him. It may be soon, but while we wait for that day, may we “walk in the light” and in the fullest enjoyment of our fellowship “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:7,3). “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

2 John: A Letter to a Lady

John's second and third brief letters, while altogether different from the first Epistle are nevertheless of great importance. They bring before us guiding principles that have often been overlooked, but are needful if the people of God are to walk in a way pleasing to God.

John deals primarily, as we have seen, with truth concerning the family of God. Peter's letters deal chiefly with the government of God. Paul's Epistles are concerned mainly with the church of God. But in these last letters, written many years after both Peter and Paul had sealed their testimony with their blood, we get instruction regarding church fellowship that we cannot afford to ignore if our fellowship is to be real.

In 2 John a Christian lady is warned regarding false teachers. Through John's warning we learn what our individual attitude toward all anti-Christian propagandists should be. In 3 John the message is the very opposite. We learn through the apostle's instruction to Gaius what our behavior should be towards those who are lovers of Christ and who go forth proclaiming His truth. These Epistles are charming in their simplicity, and give us a wonderful insight into the heart of a man who speaks of himself as an elder rather than as an apostle, even though we know he was that.

In this second letter John addressed himself to "the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth" (1). There is no reason to suppose that the elect lady is the church, as some have thought, nor yet that we should read, "the Lady Electa," as others have suggested. The elect lady was evidently a Christian

woman who, with her children, had embraced the doctrine of Christ. In all probability she was one who had been blessed and helped through John's ministry. She had evidently written to him for advice as to how she would be expected to act when imposed upon to open her home to false teachers. Would Christian charity demand that courtesy and hospitality be shown even to these, or were there other responsibilities which must first be considered? John's letter is clearly an answer to hers. He emphasized faithfulness to the truth, "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever" (2).

In his salutation he invoked grace, mercy, and peace "from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, [and this] in truth and love" (3). How full the title here! Men were teaching derogatory things concerning our Lord. The Spirit would give Him fullest honor and recognition.

John's heart had been gladdened by the good report that had reached him of the ways of "the elect lady's" household. Her children walked in the truth in accordance with the commandment received from the Father. Hers was a truly Christian home in the midst of an ungodly world. The commandment referred to in verse 4 is that which had been made known "from the beginning" (5). It is the revelation of the will of God as given by our Lord that "we love one another." But this love is not to be confused with mere fleshly sentimentality. "This is love, that we walk after his commandments" (6). Again he emphasized the fact that he was speaking of nothing new (as is customary with deceivers), but he said, "That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

The Christian teaching is not in the process of evolution. It is not passing from one stage to another as theologians and religious philosophers devise new systems. It is “the faith once...[for all] delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). That which is new and not “from the beginning” is a deceit and a delusion.

Many had already come to consider themselves as advanced, and gloried in being freed from the dogmas of the past. John spoke of these people when he wrote, “For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (7). He referred to those, later known as docetic gnostics, who denied the humanity of our Lord.

According to them Jesus only appeared to be a man. It is this error that John combated in the opening verses of his first Epistle. All such teachers the apostle branded as deceivers and antichrists. They were opposed to the Christ of God. Their denial of His manhood marked them out as unsaved men, enemies of the truth of God. To associate with these apostates in any way was dangerous, hence the admonition: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (8). Real believers cannot lose what God has bestowed in grace, but there is a grave danger that they will deprive themselves of the rewards for faithfulness if they ever tamper with the errors that are being taught by these apostates.

The primary reference, beyond all doubt, is to the gnostics of various sects, whether Cerinthian, who distinguished between the man Jesus and the divine Christ who, according to them, came to abide on and indwell Jesus at His baptism, or docetists, who denied the reality of His physical body and held that it was only an “appearance” by which the Christ revealed

Himself to men. There were many widely divergent schools of thought among these false teachers, but all rejected Christ's vicarious sacrifice for sin on the cross. All alike would rob the believer of the great foundation truths upon which the soul rests. They all boasted of progress in the revelation of divine mysteries, but the apostle condemned all such haughty claims as he solemnly declared: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (9).

John certainly is not referring to believers who may not see eye to eye with others regarding certain doctrinal subtleties. The teachers described are not Christians at all. They have therefore no claim whatever on the sympathetic cooperation of the people of God. So to this elect lady John said, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither [greet him]: For he that [greeteth him] is partaker in his evil deeds" (10-11). This instruction is clear. It positively forbids a Christian to show any fellowship whatever with a teacher of soul-destroying error. Such teachers have no right to the hospitality of believers who owe everything for eternity to the Savior whom these apostates blaspheme.

The closing verses are beautiful in their simplicity, but require no comment.

3 John: A Letter to a Friend

Third John is the correlative of Second John. In this letter we learn the breadth of Christian fellowship, and in it narrow ecclesiasticism is sharply rebuked. In this Epistle the apostle addressed Gaius, a brother in the Lord, honored for his large-heartedness, and whose home was always open to preachers of the gospel. To him John expressed the wish that he may “prosper and be in health, even as [his] soul prospereth” (2). There was no doubt of the latter condition, but a weak body is often the dwelling of a happy and prosperous soul. Traveling brethren had reported to John of the graciousness of Gaius and his walk in the truth. He was possibly a convert of John’s, as seems implied in the words, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (4).

Then he added, “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, even to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy [love] before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles” (5-7). What a sidelight this throws on conditions in the early church! As itinerate evangelists and teachers traveled about, they were graciously entertained by such as Gaius and helped on their way. They did not look to the world for sustenance. They recognized the fact that the Lord’s work should be supported by the Lord’s people. Thus they were happily independent of the heathen to whom they ministered, and so had a rightful claim on the sympathetic help of fellow believers. “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth” (8). Not everyone

may be gifted as preachers or teachers, but all can help those who are and thus keep them independent of the world, but dependent on God.

What a contrast this delightful Christian simplicity is to the unholy and utterly unchristian financial methods of many today who are presumably attempting to follow in the steps of these first century workers! High-pressure efforts to squeeze money out of Christ-rejecters and even carnal Christians is thoroughly opposed to the grace of the gospel. On the other hand Christians need to be reminded that “we ought” to further the gospel by supporting godly men as they launch out in dependence on the Lord.

From verses 9 and 10 we learn that already men had arisen in the churches who were of a narrow sectarian spirit—men of hard, rigid ecclesiastical views who despised these “free lancers,” and refused to recognize anyone outside their “group.” John had evidently written to the church where Gaius was locally connected commending an itinerant named Demetrius, but he said, “Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (9). He rejected Demetrius, and in rejecting him he was rejecting the apostle who endorsed him. “Wherefore when I come,” John continued, “I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (10). Diotrephes was the sample ecclesiastic to whom church order meant more than love of Christ’s sheep. “He does not follow us,” would be his slogan, “therefore we cannot receive his ministry or show him fellowship!” Unfortunately, the spiritual

descendants of Diotrephes are many. They may be found not only in the great denominations but in the humblest Christian assemblies. They are self-seeking, self-important, self-elected “bishops” and “overseers,” lording it over their brethren and arrogantly relegating to themselves the right to say who may or may not be recognized.

John himself, an inspired apostle, had no fear of the anathema of Diotrephes, but many a humbler worker has been utterly discouraged and turned aside by the presumptuousness of men of similar spirit. And so the message comes: “Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God [whether approved by Diotrephes or not], but he that doeth evil [whatever his ecclesiastical standing] hath not seen God” (11).

It is evident that the servant who had been so ruthlessly rejected by this self-elected leader is the man named in verse 12. “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear [witness]; and ye know that our [witness] is true.” But such a report matters little to those with the spirit of Diotrephes. They could care less that a man is honored of God, that he proclaims the truth, that his walk is blameless, that many can testify to his devotedness, piety, spirituality, and helpfulness of his ministry. These arrogant people feel that if “he followeth not with us” he must be treated as a publican and a sinner, or rejected as though he were a blasphemer. What an insult to Christ, the head of the church, and to the Holy Spirit of God! How aptly the second and third Epistles of John thus counterbalance each other—the one testifying against fellowship with apostasy, the other inculcating fellowship in the truth.

The closing verses of 3 John again are too plain to need any comment, but they testify to the freedom of communion between the apostle and his friends in Christ.

Jude: Introductory Notes

by Arno C. Gaebele

Introduction

The Epistle of Jude immediately precedes the final book of Holy Scripture, The Revelation. I believe the place given to this Epistle is the right one, for the book reveals the religious and moral conditions that will prevail on earth prior to the great event about which Revelation has so much to say. Some have called Jude the “preface” to Revelation.

The Epistle is authenticated by various ancient sources. The Muratorian fragment mentions the letter as Jude’s Epistle, and Clement of Alexandria as well as Tertullian and others cited it as Scripture. The date of the book is about the year 65.

To whom the Epistle was originally addressed is not stated. Some have surmised that, like the book of James and the Petrine Epistles, Jude was originally addressed to Jewish believers. This may be true, for Jude, like Peter, mentioned many Old Testament facts and some Jewish traditions, which were thereby confirmed as facts.

Jude’s testimony is very much like the testimony of the apostle Peter. There has been a long controversy over whether Jude copied from 2 Peter 2, or Peter copied from Jude. If Jude copied from Peter, Jude’s Epistle could not be an inspired Epistle, and vice versa. Jude may have known of Peter’s Epistle, but that does not mean that he used Peter’s Epistle. Rather, the Holy Spirit gave a similar testimony through Jude. A closer examination shows that the two passages are somewhat different.

The Author of Jude

Apart from what the Epistle tells us, we know nothing of its author. He referred to himself in the beginning of his letter as “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” But which Jude (or Judas) is he? Among the disciples were two by the name of Judas. There was Judas Iscariot, who became the instrument of the devil and then ended his miserable career by hanging himself. And there was the Judas referred to in John 14:22 as “not Iscariot.” In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 his name is given as “Judas *the brother of James*”; the words in italics were supplied by the translators, so it is really “Judas of James.” In the list of the twelve in Matthew 10:2-4 the name *Judas* occurs only once, and it refers to him who betrayed the Lord; in this passage the other Judas is called “Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus.”

A third Judas is found in Matthew 13:55: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” The question then arises, Is the writer of the Epistle of Jude the apostle “Judas of James,” also called Lebbaeus and surnamed Thaddaeus, or is he the Lord’s brother Judas, the natural brother of the writer of the Epistle of James? I endorse the latter view, that the writer of Jude is the Judas mentioned in Matthew 13:55.

(Publisher’s Note: At the time H. A. Ironside wrote his commentary on Jude [about 1931], he endorsed the former view. He stated, “The writer of this solemn yet comforting letter is the ‘Judas the brother of James,’ mentioned in the list of the apostles, as given twice by Luke [Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13].” See page 159 of this edition. However, Dr. Ironside’s later

writings seem to indicate that he may have changed his position and adopted the view that the writer of Jude was the Lord's brother.)

The Message of Jude

It seems that about the time when Jude wrote his letter, a departure from the faith set in among believers. This is confirmed by the fact that other Epistles written about the same time give warnings of the same nature as those given by Jude. The content of Jude may be described as a prophetic history of the apostasy of Christendom from its beginning in apostolic days down to its consummation at the end of the age. Then all apostasy will be dealt with and completely destroyed by the coming of the Lord. We are living right in the midst of the fulfillment of Jude's message and therefore it is of great importance for our times.

Jude, Chapter 1: Introduction (Jude 1-4)

The Salutation (Jude 1-2)

There seems no good reason to doubt, and every reason to believe, that the writer of this solemn yet comforting letter is the “Judas the brother of James,” mentioned in the list of the apostles, as given twice by Luke (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Matthew referred to him as “Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus” (Matthew 10:3), and Mark simply as “Thaddeus” (Mark 3:18). John distinguished him in a special way by speaking of him as “Judas...not Iscariot” (John 14:22). It is evident, from the way Paul wrote of James, the son of Alphaeus (the brother of Judas), that he was a close relation to the Lord Jesus. After mentioning his first interview with Peter, he said: “but other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother” (Galatians 1:19). James the great, the son of Zebedee, had met a martyr’s death earlier than the visit here referred to. Therefore it is clear that James the less is meant. The term “the Lord’s brother” does not necessarily mean the same in Greek as it does in our language. It often implies just a very close relationship. Lot is called Abram’s brother, when actually he was his nephew (Genesis 14:16). Yet if Jude had wanted to boast of his close relation to the Lord as man, he would not have written of himself as he does here, “Jude, the *servant* of Jesus Christ.” He had known Christ by ties of kindred common to few; but he knows Him as such no more. He gladly owns Him as God’s anointed, his Lord and master. Another might have used the term brother; but writing of himself, Jude is simply the “slave of Jesus Christ.” James spoke of himself in the same

way— “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1).

What a withering rebuke are these two lovely examples of devotion to Christ to those who thoughtlessly speak or write of “our brother Jesus,” or use similar terms, all calculated to detract from the glory of Christ. His own words to His disciples, after washing their feet, were, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say *well*; for so I am!” (John 13:13). How abhorrent is the pride that leads some to call themselves Christ’s “brothers,” as though He were merely a creature like themselves!

It is true that in infinite grace, as the captain of our salvation, “he is not ashamed to call [us] brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren” (Hebrews 2:11-12). But this is a very different thing from calling Him “Brother,” or speaking of ourselves as His brothers. If any object to this, let them search the Scriptures and see if anyone ever spoke of or to Him in such a way. James and Jude, who had every right to call Him “brother” scrupulously avoided such familiarity and called themselves His slaves. This is made all the more prominent in Jude’s letter, as he immediately added for the purpose of identification, “brother of James.”

He addressed himself to the “called” ones of God. It is a common title given to those whom grace has saved. The Lord’s words to His disciples while on earth were: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16). Some consider it a hard saying, when He declared, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65). All believers are called by His grace, as was Paul (Galatians 1:15), and are drawn to Christ from a

world controlled by the wicked one (1 John 5:19). What unspeakable grace is bestowed, for who is it He calls? Those who have some goodness to plead? Some merit to commend? No. He calls those who are utterly vile and corrupt, those who are completely lost. All such are “called unto the fellowship of his Son” (1 Corinthians 1:9). “And whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). There can be no failure here. He who called has justified, and will bring every called one to glory for eternity.

Such are “[beloved of] God the Father” (Jude 1). The King James version reads, “sanctified by,” but editors generally favor the former. Both statements are true, but Jude is emphasizing our place in the affections of the Father. Do we know the measure of that love? Our Lord Himself declared it when He said, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22-23). This is the measure of the Father’s love to every child of grace. There are no degrees in His affection for His children. The feeblest and the strongest are alike “[beloved of] God the Father” as truly as His Son is the Beloved of His heart.

From this flows our preservation—“Preserved in Jesus Christ.” Whatever may be the difficulties of life, however great the trial of our faith, in the love of God we are preserved by the One who has saved us. He it is who, “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Were it not for His preserving grace not one saint would persevere. “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that

come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). There is no ground for self-confidence, or fleshly elation. Such grace calls for reverent and adoring gratitude, and a walk that corresponds to the lovingkindness lavished on creatures so unworthy.

Jude used a different greeting from that of the other apostles. It is not “grace and peace,” nor yet “grace, mercy, and peace,” which he invoked upon the saints, but “mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied” (2). They were already enjoying these precious things; he wanted them abundantly increased, so their souls would be filled with holy joy. Every saint needs mercy while passing through a world like this. Peace is his portion while abiding in Christ. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). In the enjoyment of this peace the soul can pass quietly on its way amid all the strife and evil of the day, resting in Him who is over all. Love is the outflow of the new life. God is love, and the divine nature in the believer can only produce love. This love is very different from mere sentimentality, as the Epistle goes on to show. “Love in the truth” (2 John 1; 3 John 1) is that which is according to God.

Abundant is the provision for each tried saint. If mercy, peace, and love are ever lacking, it is not due to a stinted supply of grace, but rather a failure to enter into what is freely given to all who receive with thanksgiving what our God so delights to give. He never abandons a trusting, honest soul to its own resources, but has promised to meet every need according to His riches in glory, through Christ Jesus. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain

mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Never will that time of need be over until we reach our heavenly home where strife and warfare are past forever.

The Faith Once for All Delivered (Jude 3)

Carried along by the Spirit, Jude sat down to write. His own heart was filled with the joy of God’s salvation, and as he put pen to parchment, he would have been glad to write of this salvation common to every saint. But the same Holy Spirit who caused him to give all diligence to write, directed his mind as to the theme he must emphasize—a note of *warning* and *exhortation* urging believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered” (3).

The faith mentioned here is not saving faith, but rather the truth of that salvation, with all that accompanies it. This abiding faith has been given never to be added to. It is the faith “once delivered unto the saints” and no new revelations will be given to complete this truth. Like John, Jude turned the saints back to “that which was from the beginning.” There may be evolution in theology, for theology is simply the reasoning of man’s mind as to the things of God. But there is no evolution in regard to the truth. God has given His last word on the subject. It is for this truth we are called to contend.

This simple expression shuts out all the pretentious claims of new prophets, seers, and revelators. False are the claims of misguided enthusiasts who boldly declare themselves sent of God and add to His words. The signs and wonders that may accompany such pretensions are no more remarkable than those of the antichrist yet to come. The simple-hearted believer turns away from them all, and exclaims with holy

confidence, "The faith has been once for all made known. Neither assumption nor miracle will induce me to accept any additions to it." Many seekers have been attracted by the false claims of cult leaders that angels have appeared to them and given them secret spiritual teachings. The faith once delivered needs neither angelic nor human additions. It is perfect and complete, and the man of God will refuse all other and newer revelations.

The apostle Paul was given the responsibility of completing the Word of God. He was the chosen servant to whom the mysteries hidden from past ages were made known (Colossians 1:24-27). After having completed the outline of divine teaching, he wrote, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Jude added no new doctrine to what had already been presented, but exhorted those who had received this sacred truth to contend earnestly for it. Even John, in the book of Revelation, sets forth no additional line of teaching, but shows what the outcome is to be in regard to the conflict between truth and error. It is fitting, therefore, that Jude's letter should be so placed in our Bibles as to form a preface to the book of Revelation. He gave a graphic and solemn picture of the evils (already springing up among the saints in those early days) that in Revelation are portrayed in all their hideous development.

The second letter of Peter bears a close resemblance in many particulars to that of Jude. They are so similar that some who never look below the surface have surmised that one might be but an imperfect copy of the other. To the spiritually-minded

there are, however, marked differences despite the striking similarity. Peter warned of false teachers, corrupting those who are not established in the truth. If false doctrine and damnable heresies are not refused, they will bring to their followers swift destruction. But Jude was concerned more with the ungodliness that results from forsaking the truth. He warned against the grace of God being turned into lasciviousness.

Men may belittle sound doctrine, and ridicule the notion that a system of belief is of any importance in regard to a man's behavior, but Scripture shows that there cannot be proper behavior apart from soundness in the faith. The couplet, "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight; / He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," expresses what is in the minds of many, that life will never be right unless the truth of God is accepted and prevails in the heart. Therefore, there is great need for Jude's exhortation, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to contend for the faith.

The admonition is addressed, not to leaders alone, but to all the called in Jesus Christ. Since the faith was delivered to the saints as a whole, each one is responsible, in a time of departure from the truth, to contend earnestly for all that God has revealed. The believer is viewed as a soldier. He is called on to fight for what is of prime importance in God's sight. As Shammah defended a patch of lentils, the food of God's people (2 Samuel 23:11-12), so the Christian should boldly defend the truth against all enemies. If Christians were zealously guarding the treasure committed to the whole church, evil workers and false teachers would be unable to obtain a foothold. But

because of the indifference of many believers, ungodly men are able to entrench themselves in the church.

It is one thing to contend, but quite another to be contentious. “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). These verses indicate the spirit that is to characterize the one who would contend for the truth. Firmly, yet with tender compassion for those being led astray, he is to stand for all that God has revealed. When a bad, carnal spirit takes possession of someone, he is powerless to help or bless others. And it should always be remembered that in contending for the faith, the soul of the sinner has to be thought of as well. It is not enough to uphold the doctrines of Christ—actions must commend the truth that the lips proclaim. The phrase in Ephesians 4:15, translated “speaking the truth in love,” has been literally rendered, “truthing in love.” It is far more than speaking the truth that is in question— it is the truth lived out in all we do. Unless this is characteristic of the one who contends for the faith of God’s elect, the utterances of his lips will be in vain.

Clandestine Workers (Jude 4)

From the days of Simon Magus to the present it has always been the object of Satan to secretly introduce evil workers into the assemblies of God’s saints, and deceive the unwary and lead them astray. And Satan has never been lacking in those who would do his devious work.

The truth of God, if not submitted to, has a hardening effect on the one who is familiar with it. To trifle with what God has revealed is an affront to Him, and has dire consequences. Jude next warned the people of God against such men, who have a mental acquaintance with the truth but whose ways are not in accordance with that which they profess to hold. Secretly they have slipped into the assemblies of the saints, and have managed to deceive His people, but they are not unknown to God. "Before of old [they were marked out] to this condemnation" (4). *Ordained* (KJV) is too strong a word here, and fails to give the true thought. Far be it from God to ordain any man to acts of impiety and ways of deceit! But He had of old marked them out, declaring by His prophets that such men would arise. He described them clearly, so that they might readily be recognized. And He pointed out that their end is judgment.

They are described as ungodly men. This term *ungodly* is used five times in Jude's Epistle, the other four instances occurring in the quotation from Enoch. It means refusing subjection to God, and acting independently of and in opposition to Him. "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). All men in their sins are ungodly. Jude wrote of those who by profession claim to be delivered from their sins, but who actually are still in them, and secretly turning others to their own iniquitous ways.

The grace of God has neither reached their souls nor controlled their consciences. They make that very grace an occasion for lasciviousness of speech and life. Such evil workers have abounded in all ages since the gospel was made known. But the remedy given in Scripture is never legality, but rather a bowing to the truth of man's need of the very grace he

has been misusing. The sinner who judges himself before God and finds his need met in that wondrous provision of grace, will not turn from such unmerited favor. It is the unrepentant “professor” who has never seen himself in the light of God’s holiness that Jude is referring to.

In what ways do men turn “the grace of our God into lascivious-ness”? They do so by going on in their own ways, gratifying the lusts of the flesh, while professing to believe in the grace that does not impute sin to the justified soul. This is what has been well-named *antinomianism*. These perpetrators deny “the only Lord God [Master] and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They don’t necessarily deny Him at all times with their lips—often they are found professing to know Him, but denying Him by their works.

We do not need to look far to find such men. Christendom today abounds with them. They are often in the seats of honor, professing allegiance to Christ while ignoring His Word and even treating the Scriptures with contempt and assumed superiority. Nothing is too holy for their profane reasonings to set aside. “From such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).

At no time in the past history of the church have Jude’s words applied with greater force than in the present age. In Romanism, emissaries make strenuous efforts to allure the unwary by presenting a softened, subdued Catholicism to non-Catholics. They emphasize whatever is Scriptural, or ethically and esthetically lovely in the teachings of the Papacy, and carefully cover the more disgusting dogmas and practices of that apostate church. In Protestantism, the boldest infidelity and skepticism are proclaimed from thousands of pulpits, and minor sects of all kinds are everywhere spreading their

pernicious and soul-destroying errors. Therefore the man of God needs to be alert and vigilant—determined to stand for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Many false teachers would say that it makes little difference what a man believes if he lives well and is sincere. Scripture teaches, however, that the gospel alone is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). The Holy Spirit has pronounced a solemn curse against any—even an angel from Heaven—who brings a different gospel. Living a “good life,” according to the divine standard of holiness and uprightness, is a delusion and an impossibility, apart from the sanctifying power of the truth of God. And so we find that where false teaching prevails, ungodliness abounds.

Indifference to evil teaching, and genuine love for Christ and His truth cannot coexist in the same breast. Neutrality in such a case is a crime against the Lord who has redeemed us to Himself.

Jude, Chapter 2: Confronting Apostasy (Jude 5-10)

Destruction of Apostates (Jude 5-7)

When the saint of God considers the end awaiting all apostates from the truth, all bitterness toward them must of necessity be banished from the heart. They may seem to ride now on a crest of popular appreciation and support, but they will soon fall. For “surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psalm 73:18).

This is the solemn lesson we are taught by observing the unbelievers who fell in the wilderness. They started out well. All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All drank the same spiritual drink and ate the same spiritual food. But unbelief manifested itself when the time of testing came. Murmuring, idolatry, and the gainsaying of Korah (of which particular note is taken further on in this Epistle), told out the true state of many who sang with exultation on the banks of the Red Sea. Kadesh-Barnea, the place of opportunity, became but the memorial of unbelief. Though once saved out of Egypt, they were destroyed in the wilderness because of having apostatized from the living God.

In the same way the *Nephilim* (the fallen ones) had been dealt with long before. Though created as sinless angels of God, they like Lucifer, the son of the morning, bartered the realms of Heaven for selfish ends. These angels “kept not their first estate, but left then-own habitation, [and are now] reserved in

everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6).

Whether the apostle is here referring to the “sons of God” of Genesis 6 has been a debated question throughout the Christian centuries. That the beings there referred to could possibly be angels has been denounced by many spiritually-minded teachers, who see in “the sons of God” simply the seed of Seth, and in “the daughters of men” the maidens of the line of Cain. Others, equally deserving to be heard, identify the sons of God in the book of Job with those of Genesis. They accept the passage before us as the divine commentary on the solemn scene of apostasy described as the precursor of the flood, and believe that in Jude they learn the judgment of those fallen angels.

It must be admitted that verse 7 of Jude seems to corroborate the latter view. “As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Scripture seems to indicate a close relationship between the sin of these cities and that of the angels referred to in verse 6. At any rate both angels and the men of the plain fell into grievous sin through unbelief, and were punished accordingly. They rejected the light and are now presented as an example of those who will suffer and undergo the vengeance of eternal fire.

Nothing can be more solemn than this. Many centuries have elapsed since fire from heaven destroyed those cities, but the guilty apostates of that distant day are at this moment still suffering the judgment of God because of their wicked deeds. They are, along with the rich man of Luke 16, tormented in the

flames of Hades. They await the awful hour when, as Revelation 20:14 declares, “death and hades shall be cast into the lake of fire.”

Contrary to the Scriptural teaching of eternal punishment of the wicked, there are those who hold out instead the delusive dream of annihilation. They refer to Malachi 4:1-3 as the basis for their belief:

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

This passage is looked upon by the annihilationist as one of his strongest proof-texts. Assuming that the passage is talking of the final judgment, he exclaims, “What could be clearer? If the wicked are burned up like stubble, if neither root nor branch is left remaining, wouldn’t they have utterly ceased to exist? Furthermore, if they become as ashes under the soles of the saints’ feet, where is room for the awful thought of an immortal soul suffering endless judgment?”

A more careful study of Malachi 4 reveals the fact that it makes no reference to judgment after death. The Holy Ghost is describing the destruction of apostates at the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom prior to the millennium of Revelation 20. It is the *bodies* of the wicked, not their souls, which are to become as ashes under the feet of triumphant

Israel. Like stubble, their physical bodies will be destroyed as with devouring fire, so that neither root nor branch shall remain. So it was in the day when Sodom and Gomorrah and its surrounding cities met their doom. Lot or Abraham might then have trampled on the wicked, who would have been ashes under the soles of their feet after the terrible conflagration. All had been burned up—root and branch—but were they then annihilated? No. Our Lord Jesus said, “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment” than for those who rejected His ministry when here on earth (Mark 6:11). The very men and women who were burned to ashes so long ago are to rise from the dead for judgment. Where are they now, and what is their condition? Are they wrapped in a dreamless slumber, waiting in unconsciousness until the sounding of the trump of doom? No, the soul-sleeper and the annihilationist are both wrong. The inhabitants of those cities “are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!”

Truly, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). Judgment must be the portion of all who trifle with the grace shown on the cross to guilty sinners. It would be better to have never heard of Christ and His blood, than having heard, to turn from the truth to the soul-destroying fables of false teachers.

Be awake to the solemnity of these things! “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,” cried the apostle Paul, “we persuade men”. Paul also wrote, “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Corinthians 5:11, 14). Man, energized by Satan, would divorce the fear of the Lord from His love, making much of love, and

ridiculing the thought of eternal punishment. Scripture teaches that “God is light” just as much as “God is love.”

God has said, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”. But the Holy Ghost is careful to say of true believers, “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38,39). It is only those who endure to the end who will be saved—but all who are born of God will endure through divine grace. “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5).

Irreverent and Irrational Despisers of the Truth (Jude 8-10)

Unholy ways always accompany, and indeed spring from, unholy teachings. Therefore we can easily understand the readiness with which apostates from the truth give themselves up to what is defiling and abominable. Present-day advocates of “free love,” are in large measure persons who have apostatized from a nominal Christianity, and now tolerate and even stand for what they once would have abhorred. What would once have been rebuked, even by the world, is now advocated by a Christless pulpit. Men and women sustaining unholy relations are rocked to sleep in their sins while death, judgment, and eternal punishment are fast approaching! The rejection of the inspiration of the Bible places the law of God, as expressed in the ten commandments, among the productions of the human mind. Therefore its code of morals is spurned and a lower ethical system, more in keeping with present day conditions, is substituted. And so loose standards prevail where Scripture no longer speaks with authority. “They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?” (Jeremiah 8:9).

Coupled with this new standard of morals, so opposed to the purity of Scripture, will be found a limitless pride that boasts itself against every unseen power. Satan is no longer feared, but his very existence denied on the one hand, or his superhuman ability ridiculed on the other. How different was the behavior of Michael the archangel, who, “when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 9). All kinds of ingenious theories have been advanced concerning the nature of this dispute, but as God Himself has not given us the particulars, it would seem useless to speculate. When we know as we are known, this and all other mysteries will be solved in a place where we can no longer pride ourselves in our knowledge.

It is important to observe that in Scripture, the word *archangel* occurs only in the singular. Michael (meaning, “who is [as] god”) is *the* archangel. Gabriel is never given that title. Some have sought to identify Michael with the Son of God Himself, but as there is no hint of such an identity, it is unwise to theorize. Michael appears in the book of Daniel as “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy [the prophet’s] people”—that is, of Israel (Daniel 12:1). In Revelation 12:7 he appears as the leader of the angelic hosts driving Satan from the heavens when his days of accusing the brethren are ended. Here he is seen contending for the body of Moses; and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 he seems to be a distinct being, whose voice (as Israel’s prince) will be heard in connection with the rapture of the church. It is noticeable that in Daniel 10:13 he is called, “Michael, one of the chief princes,” a title that would be completely inconsistent with our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.

It is solemn indeed to be told that such a great being “durst not bring a railing accusation” against the devil, while proud, ignorant men speak boldly against all that is high and beyond their comprehension. Even in what they do understand they do not behave with propriety, but like natural brute beasts, they corrupt themselves, and display an inability to curb their fleshly lusts. They know no shame, and complain loudly against the unknowable. Such actions are the result of the deification of the human mind and scientific knowledge.

Judgment is fast approaching and it becomes increasingly important that those who know God search His Word and value His truth. Remember that perilous times have come, when, if it were possible, Satan would deceive the very elect. It is only by the grace of God that any are kept from error and the evil practices that result. Paul reminded the Thessalonians of this sustaining grace: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). If any abide in the truth, it is due to the fact that God himself has chosen them, and sustains them in their path. “Where is boasting then? It is excluded” (Romans 3:27).

Jude, Chapter 3: Defining Apostasy (Jude 11-19)

Jude presents a three-fold apostasy. He identifies them as, “the way of Cain,” “the error of Balaam,” and the “gainsaying of [Koran].”

The Way of Cain (Jude 11a)

Strictly speaking there are only two religions in the world—true religion, that of God’s appointing, and false religion, the product of man’s own mind. The first is the religion of faith; the second that of credulity or superstition, in whatever form it may appear.

In the beginning God made known to guilty man the truth that death and judgment were his rightful portion, only to be averted by the sacrifice of the seed of the woman. In the fullness of time He would appear as the sinner’s Savior, bruising the serpent’s head, though Himself wounded in the heel. This was the revelation in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). In accordance with this revelation, faith taught those who were saved by grace, the propriety of approaching God, the Holy One, on the ground of sacrifice. Each bleeding sacrifice pointed to Jesus who was to be made sin so that guilty men might be delivered from their sins and stand before the throne of the Most High uncondemned. Therefore we read, “By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4). Abel did not offer his sacrifice by intuition, but by *faith*—through a revelation apprehending the

mind of God. He brought a sacrifice which told of a life forfeited—a sinless substitute, whose vicarious death could take the place of the guilty one. This lamb of Abel's speaks loudly, even though he who offered it has long been numbered with the dead in Christ.

This is the heart of the gospel: "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). Everywhere in Scripture the same testimony is given, for "without shedding of blood [there] is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Now this is exactly what, in principle, Cain denied. He brought an offering to God according to the promptings of his own heart "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), as is the heart of every natural man. His sacrifice seemed fair and lovely: the fruits of the ground, brought forth by toil and labor. But there was no recognition of the true character of sin and its punishment. God's sentence of death on account of sin is refused; therefore no life is given, no blood is shed. This is natural religion as opposed to what has been divinely revealed. The fruit of Cain pictures man's effort to attain all that is fair in character-building, all that is lovely in human accomplishment. These things are beautiful indeed if the fruit of divine grace already exists in the soul. But they are of no use whatsoever to meet the claims of divine justice, or to purge the conscience and cleanse the soul from the stain of sin. It is clear that "the way of Cain" is a comprehensive title, embracing every form of religious

teaching, ceremony, or cult that ignores the need of the vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The substitution of rites and ceremonies for simple faith in Christ and the subtle speculation of modern religious systems tend to deify man in his own estimation and free him from “the degrading thought” that he is a *sinner needing a Savior*. These humanistic religions all spring from one and the same thing—the pride of the human heart. This pride substitutes the notions of the unregenerate mind for the revealed truth of the Word of God. These “religions” are merely different forms of one common human religion—the way of Cain— and can only lead their deluded followers to share Cain’s doom.

Every “new theology” of the day is as old as the fallen creation. It was first pictured in the fig-leaf garments of Adam and Eve; then crystalized, as it were, in the offering of Cain. Every sinner who is too proud to admit his guilt and trust the atoning sacrifice of the Christ of God is a follower of the way of Cain, whatever form his superstition may have taken. Thousands who follow this way consider Christ as just a martyr merely following His conscience. They trample beneath their feet the *atoning* value of the blood of Christ and proudly dare to approach a holy God with the fruits and flowers of nature—the works of their hand.

So with readiness, refusing the ministry of the Holy Spirit, these followers of Cain give themselves up to the second apostasy.

The Error of Balaam (Jude 11b)

Three times in the New Testament we read about Balaam, the false prophet who “taught Balac to cast a stumbling block

before the children of Israel” (Revelation 2:14). In a passage very nearly similar to the one before us, Peter wrote of “the way of Balaam” (2 Peter 2:15). The glorified Christ, in Revelation 2:14 speaks of “the *doctrine* of Balaam.” And here in verse 11, Jude mentioned his *error*. That the three are intimately related is self-evident. Out of Balaam’s error sprang both his way and his doctrine. He was a striking example of those whose sole object of godliness is greed. They consider it right and proper that religion should be used to minister to one’s personal advantage. Leo the Tenth was a true disciple of Balaam when he exclaimed to his cardinals, “What a profitable thing this myth about Jesus Christ has been to us!” This was also the thinking of Simon the magician in Acts 8:18-19. Every person, of whatever sect or system, who enters religious ministry solely for financial gain has followed after the error of Balaam.

Balaam’s history, as recorded in the book of Numbers, is an intensely solemn one. He “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15). While professedly a prophet of God, he endeavored to prostitute his sacred office for the accumulation of wealth. At times deterred by fear and at times by a sense of propriety, he yet persisted in the effort to either curse or seduce the people of God for his own advantage. He stands before us branded on the page of the Bible as one who, for temporary profit, would stifle his own convictions and lead astray those directed by him.

The same dreadful error is at the bottom of the vast majority of false “religious” systems. Which of them would exist for a month without the influence of money? Try to imagine the false teachers giving freely what they profess to believe is divine, suffering uncomplainingly in order to carry their false

gospels to the ends of the earth, or dying triumphantly to seal their testimony in blood as did the early Christians. All human systems, however orthodox outwardly, come under the same covetous spell when they depart from the Word of truth. This covetousness leads them to please not God, but men. Only comforting things are prophesied, and offensive truths are scarcely mentioned, or altogether avoided. False doctrines are taught in order that the purse strings of the ungodly may be loosened, and the ministry be made a profitable and honorable occupation.

In the early church, Christ's followers went forth in simple dependence on the Lord, "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7). Like Elisha, they refused anything that looked like payment tendered for the gift of God. Like Abraham, they would not be enriched by Sodom's king. And like Peter, they spurned the money of the unworthy that nothing evil should taint their ministry. But it is far different with the "popular apostles" of a Christless religion. Like Gehazi, they run after every healed Naaman and beg or demand a fee. Like Lot, they pitch their tent towards, then build a house in Sodom. Like Simon Magus, whose very name gives title to this most odious of all sins, they practice their simony unblushingly, and think that the gift of God can be purchased with money. But the dark clouds of judgment are gathering overhead, and soon they will learn, as Balaam did, the folly of pursuing such evil.

Korah's Rebellion (Jude 11c)

Korah represents the last of the unholy trinity of apostasy. The way of Cain is false religion. The error of Balaam is false ministry. The rebellion of Korah is false worship and denial of Christ's authority.

Korah was not a priest, and neither were any of his rebellious company. They were Levites, whose business it was to attend to the outward service of the tabernacle. But lured on by pride they rose up against Moses and Aaron (types of Christ as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession”), and setting aside God’s anointed, sought to force their way into His presence as priests and to worship before Him without divine warrant or title. This mindset is prevalent today. Independent and inflated with a sense of their own self-importance, vain men openly rebel against the authority of the Lord as Apostle and Priest. They dare to approach God as worshipers apart from Him, and ignore His claims. This is the leaven that is fast permeating unbelieving Christendom—the claim that all men by nature are sons of God. The declaration that they need no mediating High Priest is heard on every hand, and will increase and spread as the end draws nearer. Jude says that these apostates “perished in the gainsaying of Core” (Jude 11). He speaks of their doom as a settled thing. Just as sure as judgment came to Korah and all his company when the earth opened her mouth and they went down alive into the pit, so shall judgment overtake those who rebel against the Lord of glory and follow in Korah’s footsteps.

It is precious to read in Numbers 26:11, “Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.” Linked as they were by natural ties to the proud rebel, Korah’s children chose a different course, and are heard singing in Psalm 84:10, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Happy are all who are numbered in the same holy company!

The Divine Indictment of Evil Workers (Jude 12-13)

There is something unspeakably solemn in this severe indictment of those who profess to be followers of Christ and servants of God, but who really walk in a self-chosen path. Elsewhere they are described as “enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:18-19). Remember that throughout Jude’s warning letter, the evil-workers referred to are not those who oppose Christ outside the circle of profession, but rather are those inside the nominal church who make their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus a cover for their own selfish ends. They are often considered leaders of Christian thought and champions of truth and righteousness. But underlying all they say and do, there is the open, or covert, denial of everything that really makes for godliness. To the heavenly calling they are strangers; hence their aim and object is to advance their own interests in this world. They dwell upon the earth. They know nothing of pilgrimage in the Scriptural sense. Their place and portion are in this world, not in Heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Metaphor after metaphor is used by the Holy Spirit to describe these false apostles and ministers of unrighteousness. Every phrase is important, and demands careful consideration. “These are spots in your [love] feasts” (12). Perhaps, in place of “spots,” it will be clearer if we read, “sunken, or hidden rocks.” Such are these apostate teachers. Clearly-marked rocks are not a great danger to the mariner. It is the rocks that are hidden, over whose jagged edges roll the deceitfully peaceful waters, that are most to be dreaded. If these false teachers were to openly proclaim their opposition to what the godly

hold sacred, their influence would be quickly nullified. But, posing as advocates of the truth, they deceive the hearts of the simple with their good words and fair speeches.

The expression, “they feast with you.. .without fear,” shows how fully they have gained the confidence of the mass. They participate fearlessly in holy Christian communion, but never enter into the spirit of love and fellowship with the Lord. They observe the form, pretending to piety and devotion, while all the time looking but to their own interests.

“Feeding themselves,” these apostates attend to their own needs instead of shepherding the flock of God. They who should feed the sheep and lambs of Christ’s flock, fleece them instead, and consider them as those whose place it is to contribute to their honor, wealth, and dignity. Scripture knows of no distinction between clergy and laity. All believers are God’s *kleros* (or clergy)—His allotted portion. If some are raised up to act as pastors, by guiding and caring for those weaker or less instructed, they do it as a service to the Lord, the Chief Shepherd. These godly elders serve “not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage [*kleros*], but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-4). To this sincere and true-hearted devotedness these deceitful workers are utter strangers. Their true characters are even more graphically depicted in the metaphors taken from nature that immediately follow.

“Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.” Big with promise, pretentious and impressive, their utterances are a disappointment to any who know the mind of God as revealed in His Word. In place of refreshing showers of spiritual blessing accompanying their ministry, there are but

empty vapors and idle threatenings. In place of divine certainty, their fanciful theories and ever-changing notions reveal the fact that they themselves are blown around by every wind of human teaching (Ephesians 4:14), “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).

They are further described as “trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” Having a fair outward appearance, they are like trees which in the season of fruit bear only leaves—like the fig tree cursed by the Lord, which dried up from the roots. These indeed are “twice dead,” for they are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and dead too in a false profession. “Every plant,” said the Lord Jesus, “which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13). So these apostles are seen already, in God’s estimation, as plucked up by the roots. In man’s eye they make a fair show in the flesh, but in the sight of God their judgment is already pronounced.

Impatient of restraint or rebuke of any kind, they are next likened to “raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame” (13). They feel no shame or remorse at what they say or do. By their very speech they show the true condition of their rebellious hearts when confronted with the Word that exposes the hollowness of their arguments. “The unjust knoweth no shame” (Zephaniah 3:5), but rather proudly glory in their evil before God and man. It is a blessing for those who cling to the Lord that He has set bounds to this sea, as to that in nature, beyond which its angry waters cannot go. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains (see Psalm 76:10).

The last description of apostates portrays the doom that yet awaits those who trifle with holy things. They are “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” Like lost planets hurled out of their natural orbit, they flare brilliantly for the moment, then plunge off at a tangent into ever-deepening darkness as they rush through the fathomless depths of space farther and farther from the source of light. Such will be the end of all who now refuse the Light of life, and prefer instead to kindle their own fire, and compass themselves about with sparks (Isaiah 50:11). Solemnly the Holy Spirit says to every child of grace, “From such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).

Enoch's Prophecy (Jude 14-15)

The source of Jude's information as to this prophecy of Enoch “the seventh from Adam” is not given. Critics have tried to find out, but to little purpose, or profit. There is an apocryphal book bearing Enoch's name which dates from pre-Christian times. It contains language very similar to that here recorded, but the nature of the book forbids the thought that it can be equated with Holy Scriptures. Yet it seems evident that in some way, whether orally or in writing, God has seen fit to preserve Enoch's prophecy. It was partially fulfilled in the flood. Jude, by divine inspiration, declared that a more complete fulfillment awaits the return of the Lord Jesus, to take vengeance on all who have refused His grace and spurned the Holy Spirit.

What is referred to here in verses 14-15 is something very different from the happy event predicted in John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51, and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In those Scriptures, the theme is the return of the Lord to translate His

saints to Heaven, of which Enoch's rapture was a type. This could take place before the reader lays down this book. In a moment, the Lord may descend and call all His own to meet Him in the air. But this will not be the believer's nor Christ's unveiling before the world. That manifestation will take place later. While the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb transpire in Heaven, on earth apostasy will rise to its full height in the revelation and acceptance of antichrist, and the utter rejection of all that is of God. Then, when the cup of guilty Christendom's iniquity is full, the Lord will come to the earth with a myriad of His redeemed saints and unfallen angels to execute the judgment long foretold on the despisers of His word.

A very similar expression occurs in chapter 14 of Zechariah's prophecy: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:5). In each passage "saints" or "holy ones" does not, of itself, necessarily refer to redeemed humanity. Angels are also referred to as "saints" or "holy ones," and some would therefore limit the application to them alone. But Scripture clearly teaches the double aspect of the second coming of the Lord. He is coming *for* His saints (John 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). He is also coming *with* them (Colossians 3:4). Caught up to meet Him as He descends with a shout, they will return with Him in manifested glory— when Enoch's prophecy and that of Zechariah will be fulfilled. Then will righteousness reign. Every enemy will be destroyed. No longer will impious deceivers profit by a profession of Christianity while secretly working to undermine the faith of God's elect. To every one will be rendered according to their works.

While the present period (from the cross to the coming again of the Lord) lasts, God endures sinful men with much longsuffering. But when this period ends, the day of the Lord begins, when He who has been so long silent will arise to act in judgment on those who have taught blasphemous and damnable heresies. Then apostate men, who have despised the Word of truth, will learn too late that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Reader, challenge your heart *now* as to how you will stand *then*!

Unholy Separatists (Jude 16-19)

Just as the true servant of the Lord bears not only the doctrine of Christ, but commends himself by displaying the fruits of the Spirit, so Satan’s false apostles not only deny the truth, but display characteristic signs that soon reveal them as wolves in sheep’s clothing. They may attempt to speak as believers, but their habits and ways betray them.

Like the mixed multitude who came up out of Egypt, in company with redeemed Israel, those of whom Jude wrote to warn us are murmurers and complainers. Never having learned the initial lesson of subjection to God, they soon find the path of outward obedience to His Word incredibly irksome, for “the carnal mind.. is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). Therefore they continually object to the plainest precepts of the Holy Scriptures.

Aiming only to please themselves, they walk unashamedly after their own lusts, using their sacred calling as a ladder to worldly gain and ecclesiastical honor. They do not understand

self-denying service for Christ's sake, or being constrained by His all-conquering love. Yet they resent with indignation the suggestion that greed for money and power is the controlling principle of their lives. But He who sees not as man sees has searched them through and through, and here records their true character.

Great swelling words fall glibly from their unsanctified lips as they boast of human progress and accomplishments, while forgetting the dreadful fact that man's will, until subdued by divine grace, is as much opposed to God as ever it was in the past. They forget it was man's sinful, stubborn will that nailed God's Son to a cross and poured judgment on His devoted head.

The fifth accusation against these deceitful workers is one to which many are now so accustomed that it never occurs to them as one of the special signs of apostasy—admiring persons for the sake of profit. The extent to which the public fawns over church dignitaries is shameful and disgusting. Adulation is carried to such an extreme as to be positively nauseating. But it is the order of the day, and will become increasingly prevalent as man is, inch by inch, pushed into the place of God. The consummation of this evil is found in the man of sin described in 2 Thessalonians 2. The deification of humanity and the humanizing of deity in the minds of men is the natural outcome of all this. How different was the spirit of Elihu, who declared, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away" (Job 32:21-22).

It is good for the soul guided by Scripture to remember that nothing man sees around him was unforeseen by God. Unbelief and apostasy may abound, but nothing takes God by surprise. The coming of mockers, walking after their own unholy desires, has been foretold from the beginning. The apostles warned of the spiritual declension that would characterize the last days.

Believers should not be overtaken by fear and gloom when they see teacher after teacher apostatizing from the truth, and the love of many growing cold, while erroneous teaching carries many away. Like the prophet, they may be ready to cry, "Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." But Isaiah also added, "The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment" (Isaiah 59:14-15). They will be encouraged to know that the prevailing evil has been foreknown by God from eternal times. In fact they should not expect anything else. The events they see around them firmly establishes the truth of Scripture. All this must happen before the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore they are strengthened in the realization that this very darkness will usher in the shining-forth of the Morning Star, and the rising in glory of the Sun of Righteousness. Prophecy is "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). Led on by this sure and steady gleam, the humble child of God will not be dazzled by the pretensions, nor disheartened by the evil influence of these haughty resisters of the truth.

"These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19). These apostates set themselves apart as a

select circle, pretending to have attained a level of spirituality beyond the common Christian. There is a spiritual and a carnal separation. The former is separation from evil at the call of the Word of God. The latter is a walking apart in fancied superiority, led on by pride and boastfulness. This is what marks out the class Jude is portraying, *in the day of their power*.

It should be noted that Jude traced for us the growth of apostasy. He began with evil workers privily creeping in, under cover of a Christian profession. Before he closed they are pictured as having cast off all fear, as though their very strength made secrecy unnecessary. In place of caution and covered tracks, we have exaggerated pride and superiority even to the forming of an elite sect who delegate to themselves all spiritual light and privilege, as well as human learning and scholarship. But great swelling words, even when coupled with the most arrogant presumption, can never overthrow the truth of the eternal Word. "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Of the Word of God, as of the Son of God, it can be said, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44). God is silent now, while men blaspheme His name and stumble over His Word. But soon He will speak from Heaven, when all will know "with whom [they] have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Then it will be revealed that those who opposed Him in their pride were but natural men without the Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

This explains the difficulty many have in regard to believing the great truths of Scripture. They are unregenerate, natural men, attempting to act as ministers of Christ. But their speech betrays them.

Jude, Chapter 4: Call to Persevere (Jude 20-23)

Dark and gloomy as the picture has been drawn for our warning by the pen of inspiration, there is yet no cause for despair. “Upon this rock,” said Christ, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). The final result is sure. Victory will rest on the blood-stained banner of the Prince of Peace. In the hour of His triumph His faithful ones will share in His glory. In the present moment of their trial and His rejection they have an abundant solace and cheer, for they know that the power of Satan and his doctrine of error will never vanquish the truth.

The saint of God needs to daily build himself up on his “most holy faith” (Jude 20). It is the revealed will of the Lord that is referred to here, as in verse 3—“The faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” On it the believer rests. Assured that it forms a foundation impregnable by every attack of men or demons, he is now to build himself on it. This building implies continual feeding on the Word, that the soul may be nourished and the spirit edified. Linked with this we have prayer in the Holy Spirit—not perfunctory saying of prayers, but spiritual communion with God, bringing to Him every need and every difficulty, assured that He waits in grace to meet the one and to dissolve the other. Praying in the Holy Spirit can only result from a walk in the Spirit. For if there is no self-judgment, prayer will be selfish. We will ask and receive not, because we will be asking that our own lusts may be gratified. When Christ is first in the soul, and the heart is finding its delight in Him,

the Holy Spirit will Himself give us the petitions that God delights to grant.

A definite command follows: “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (21). Notice, it is not, “Keep God loving you.” Such a thought is opposed to Him whose nature is love. The cross demonstrated that love to the fullest. Daily the believer proves His lovingkindness. Nor did the apostle exhort us to keep loving God. The divine nature in every believer causes us to love Him who has saved us: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Rather we are told to “keep ourselves in the love of God.” It is as though I say to my child, “Stay in the sunshine.” The sun shines whether we enjoy it or not. And so God’s love abides unchanging, even if we do not stay in the conscious enjoyment of it. Let nothing make the troubled soul doubt that love. Circumstances cannot alter it. Difficulties and failures cannot strain it. The soul that relies on His love will be carried in triumph above the conflicts and discouragements of life.

In the second half of verse 21 we have another exhortation. We are to look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to await His mercy unto eternal life. We have eternal life now, by faith in Him who is Himself life eternal. But we are going on to a place where life will reign, and where everything will be suited to the life we already have by the Spirit. And so the trusting soul looks up in hope and waits in patience for the return of the Lord.

Verses 22-23 tell us how to deal with bewildered souls led astray by the wicked deceivers against whom we have been warned. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating

even the garment spotted by the flesh.” There is considerable manuscript variation here. In addition to the King James version, the following is suggested: “And some convict, when contending; but others save with fear, snatching them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” There is not much difference in the meaning of the exhortations. Both direct that a godly discrimination be used in dealing with persons taken in error. A hard and fast rule for treating all alike is contrary to this verse, and to the tenor of Scripture.

Undoubtedly souls have been driven more completely into evil systems by the harshness of well-meaning but unwise persons who so feared contamination with the error that they did not seek, in a godly way, to help the deceived one before refusing him their fellowship. The instruction in 2 John 10 applies to a willful teacher of what is opposed to the doctrine of Christ. Such are to be shunned, and even refused a common greeting.

Other methods apply to dealing with those who are often entrapped in error through ignorance. Admittedly these persons have followed their own corrupt will or they would have been kept in the truth by God’s power. Often what is needed is to deal with the sinner as to his ways, rather than the teaching he has accepted. When there is self-judgment the Holy Spirit can be depended on to do His work of guiding into all truth.

Others need to be snatched from the fire. Energetic effort should be made to warn and deliver these souls before the evil gets so firm a hold on them that it is too late for them to seek blessing. But in every instance the believer needs to remember that unholy teaching is defiling and leads to unholy living. Care must be exercised lest, in seeking to aid another, the believer

himself becomes ensnared by the evil influence. In so doing he will be unfit to help others because his own fellowship with God in the truth has become marred.

Truth is learned in the conscience, and only as one walks carefully and soberly before God is there security from error. Because Hymenaeus and Alexander did not maintain a good conscience, they shipwrecked their faith—as have untold thousands besides (1 Timothy 1:18-20). When the Spirit is grieved by a careless demeanor and reckless living He no longer confirms that soul in the truth, but actively convicts the conscience of the sin and failure that have dishonored the Lord. Therefore, if there would be growth in the knowledge of His Word, there must be a walk in the power of the Spirit ungrieved.

So, in seeking the recovery of those who have erred from the truth, the Spirit's ministry to the conscience must not be lost sight of. Otherwise while we may be able to reason with them from Scripture as to the error of their beliefs, the state of their soul may be lost as ever. When the deceived one is dealt with in the fear of God, and holy faithfulness, his restoration to fellowship will be the first step sought. Then he will see more clearly the seriousness of the evil teaching that led him astray. But in all this the believer always needs to have godly concern lest he himself becomes defiled when seeking to recover another from defilement. This is what is especially emphasized in Jude 23.

Jude, Chapter 5: Doxology (Jude 24-25)

What a song of holy exultation with which to close a letter that has drawn so dark a picture of the dangers besetting the path of the faithful man! God lives and reigns. His power is limitless. His grace is boundless. His glory and majesty will through all eternity remain untouched by all the evil thoughts and ways of sinful men. The Christian can pillow his head on these blessed and soul-inspiring truths, and so rise above all discouragement, and go on in holy confidence to more than conquer!

“Unto him that is able” (24)—this is what gives new strength to the wearied warrior. Weak and helpless in himself, he looks up in faith to the One who is able and thus out of weakness he is made strong. Let the difficulties of the path be what they may—however thickly strewn with briars and snares—God is able to keep the trusting soul from stumbling. David knew this when he sang, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4). This is comfort enough for faith in the darkest and most trying hour. I may not see a step before me, but He who is able sees the end from the beginning, and bids me confide in His love and wisdom. Thus I implicitly trust myself to His guidance.

No believer would question the power of God to keep him five minutes without stumbling. But He who can keep for five minutes can keep you for sixty. He who can keep for an hour can keep you for twenty-four. And He who can keep for one day can keep you all the days if your eye and heart are fixed on Him. For this very purpose our Lord Jesus Christ has been

“separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26). He prayed, “For their sakes I sanctify myself [or, set myself apart], that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). Thus He became in heavenly glory the object of His people’s hearts, that daily “looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2) they might be kept from stumbling. And as He has everything we need for our earthly journey, so the end is sure. He is able “to present you faultless before.. .his glory.” There will be no failure here. God has predestined every believer to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). To this end Christ, who loved the church and gave Himself for it, is now engaged in its sanctification and daily cleansing by water-washing of the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing (Ephesians 5:25-27). Then the Eve of the last Adam will be revealed in the same glory with Himself—and all because God is able! Blessed heart-refreshing, and soul-uplifting truths are these!

In verse 25 the King James version ascribes adoration and praise to “the only wise God our Saviour.” The Revised version, and all later translations, omit the word “wise,” as unsupported by the better authorities. But granting it to be an alteration made inadvertently or otherwise by some pious scribe, it shows the effect that the transcribing of this Epistle had on this unknown soul. Contemplating it, his heart was filled and he cried in hallowed ecstasy, “This God is the only wise God. He is indeed perfect in wisdom.” He is indeed the *only* God, for all others are but the imaginings of men’s minds. The believer does not view Him as judge, but with purged conscience worships before the mercy seat as he acknowledges Him as his Savior-God. He it was who so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son that we might live through Him.

Thus all blessing flows down to us from the heart of God “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” in whose name we return our feeble praises. To Him belongs all “glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever” (25). For this Christ Jesus gave Himself when He died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Thus He became the Lamb of God who carries away the sin of the world. Even though we still see the effects of sin that mars God’s creation, He is still working out His eternal purpose. When time has run its course, and the last remains of sin are banished to the lake of fire, then the sinless ages of eternity will be ushered in. Then God will be all and in all forevermore, and none will dispute His authority or seek to detract from His glory again.

“Amen,” swells up from every believer’s breast, and faith looks on with joyful anticipation to the accomplishment of every one of His good promises. This affirmative word is, in the succeeding book of Revelation, used by the Son of God as one of His own names, or titles: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). He is, in His own character, the affirmation of all God’s plans and ways. Through Him all will end in perfection. All glory, majesty, and authority will be ascribed to the God of all grace while endless ages roll on to infinity. Amen and Amen!

Author Biography

Henry Allan Ironside, one of the twentieth century's greatest preachers, was born in Toronto, Canada, on October 14, 1876. He lived his life by faith; his needs at crucial moments were met in the most remarkable ways.

Though his classes stopped with grammar school, his fondness for reading and an incredibly retentive memory put learning to use. His scholarship was well recognized in academic circles with Wheaton College awarding an honorary Litt.D. in 1930 and Bob Jones University an honorary D.D. in 1942. Dr. Ironside was also appointed to the boards of numerous Bible institutes, seminaries, and Christian organizations.

"HAI" lived to preach and he did so widely throughout the United States and abroad. E. Schuyler English, in his biography of Ironside, revealed that during 1948, the year HAI was 72, and in spite of failing eyesight, he "gave 569 addresses, besides participating in many other ways." In his eighteen years at Chicago's Moody Memorial Church, his only pastorate, every Sunday but two had at least one profession of faith in Christ.

H. A. Ironside went to be with the Lord on January 15, 1951. Throughout his ministry, he authored expositions on 51 books of the Bible and through the great clarity of his messages led hundreds of thousands, worldwide, to acknowledge of God's Word. His words are as fresh and meaningful today as when first preached.

The official biography of Dr. Ironside, H. A. *Ironside: Ordained of the Lord*, is available from the publisher.



To God be the glory.