

1 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

John's epistle is an intensely practical one in many ways. For example, not once is the word "*knowledge*" found in the form of a noun, but always as a verb. The same is true of "*faith*;" he almost invariably uses the verbal form. With John doctrine is not mere dogma, but faith in action. Truth is not merely a theory, but an energy, which lives and moves in the new life. There is scarcely any strictly "*doctrinal*" teaching, and very few direct exhortations. It is mainly the vital and experimental side of things, and thus it is that the line of demarcation and separation is so sharply and often drawn between genuine and graceless professors—not to discourage believers, but to inform and safeguard them against being deceived and imposed upon. John did far more than deal with forms of error which were local and ephemeral, refuting those of his day in a manner by which he enunciated principles of universal importance and of almost illimitable application—equally suited to the exposure of error in every age.

It is remarkable how many different topics are introduced into this brief letter, so that we are almost justified in saying with J. Morgan, "The whole realm of evangelical truth is traversed by the apostle." Blessed it is to see how the balance of Truth is preserved there. No one would regard it as a theological treatise, yet most of the fundamentals of our faith are briefly set forth in it. The divine incarnation (1:1-3), the nature of God (1:5; 4:8), the atonement and advocacy of Christ (2:1, 2), the person and work of the Holy Spirit (3:24), regeneration (2:29), the Trinity (5:7), etc. The epistle is far from being an appeal to emotionalism, yet it bids believers, "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon them*" (3:1), and while affording no encouragement to rest upon feelings (as its repeated dogmatic "*we know*" shows), yet it is written that "*our joy may be full*." While it is not a discourse on humanitarianism, it stresses practical altruism (3:17, 18). Though not a discussion of eschatology, yet the return of Christ (2:28) and, "*the day of judgment*" (4:17) are mentioned. Thus this epistle supplies an admirable corrective to one-sided views of the Christian life.

Reference was made to the fact that those whom John immediately addressed were being assailed by heretical teachers (2:26). Many conjectures have been made as to the precise nature of their errors, and the names of those who propagated them. Most probably they were a branch of the Gnostics, Ebion and Cerentheus being the leaders; but this cannot be determined for sure. What we may be certain about them is, (1) that those who were then seeking to seduce John's converts had themselves once been professing Christians, but later apostatized (2:19); and (2) that they denied the reality of our Lord's humanity (4:3). It is, then, with the design of counteracting that error that John here lays so much emphasis upon the evidences which the incarnate Word had presented to the very senses of His apostles. The "*Christian [?] Gnostics*" taught that Christ's body was but a phantasm, a mere temporary appearance assumed for the benefit of the world.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

1 John 1:1-2

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. (1 John 1:2)

He is the true God and eternal life. (5:20)

Could we compress into a single word all the voices of nature and redemption on Easter morning, that one word which would come throbbing from the full pulses of the spring, the flowers, the bursting buds, the songs of birds, the open grave of the risen Lord and the overflowing hearts and thankful praises of rejoicing saints would be—LIFE.

And this one significant word is the keynote of the profoundest books in the New Testament, the Gospel and the Epistles of John. The others tell us of the truth and character and righteousness, but these tell us of life. The others tell us what to do and be, but these tell us the secret of what we may become and how we may accomplish the things set before us. The mystery of nature is life. The one thing short of which all man's wisdom and resources reach is life. Science can give us the principles of things and can even construct the forces of nature, but only God can give this strange and subtle thrill which sets all in spontaneous motion and gives it life.

The Sermon on the Mount tells us what an ideal life should be, but the Gospel of John tells us how that ideal may become a reality. It starts with the mysterious secret of the new birth where life begins, and it leads up to the highest developments of the sanctified and glorified life in the age to come. The Epistles of John still more fully unfold the source, the evolution and the outflow of divine life.

Before a planet rolled, an insect buzzed or an angel sang, Christ was Himself the eternal life. Our text has in the original a stronger emphasis than the Revised Version expresses, and it reads literally thus: "We show unto you that life, the eternal, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). And so our second text more fully expresses the same thought, "He is the true God, and the life eternal" (5:20). Jesus is the life and from Him all life has come. The life of nature is the outflow of His creating power. The life of mind and thought and intellect is but a radiation from His infinite mind. The power that moves the universe from the mightiest sphere to the minutest spray is His personal life, for "in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17), and "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The tint of the Easter lily, the fragrance of the hyacinth, the teeming life of the vegetable world all come from Him. The birth of every newborn soul is begotten of His life. The Church of every age and clime is the new creation of His life and power. The life of every saint is sustained every moment by the life of His living Head. It is so good therefore, to know that His life is life eternal, and that in Him there is a fountain of life that never can run dry, a sufficiency that never can fail. The word "eternal" here does not merely convey the idea of existence that has neither beginning nor ending, but it lifts us into a higher sphere of life. It is a kind of life that belongs to a loftier plane than the things that are seen and temporal. It is a life that is as infinite in its scope as it is enduring in its length; a great unfathomable ocean of infinite fullness and glorious all-sufficiency. Let us adore the Prince of Life, the Living One, the glorious Son of God who stands before us in His radiant and eternal life, proclaiming, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" (Revelation 1:18).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Compare 1 John 1:1 with John 1:1 using 1 John 5:7 and Revelation 19:13 to bring out the meaning more fully.

Explain how the "Word of life" works in our life to be the link connecting us with God.

John 5:25, 28, 29 John 10:10 John 10:15-17 Acts 3:15 Rom. 5:17-21 Col. 1:16 Col. 3:4

The physical experience of the favored apostles, as set forth by the four verbs in verse 1, is duplicated in the spirit history of each Christian, and in the same progressive order. At first, his knowledge of Christ is limited to what he hears of Him in the Gospel. Then, when the miracle of grace has been wrought within him, he sees Christ with the eyes of faith—loving and giving Himself for him. Later, as he grows in grace, and becomes more and more enamored of Him he looks upon Him more steadfastly and closely with the eyes of love and adoration; the result of all being that, in a spiritual way, he handles Christ. He has become a bright, living, experiential reality to him. The matchless charms and superlative glories of the Savior make everything else appear mean and contemptible to him. The soul now has before it a heavenly Object, infinitely excelling all the perishing things of earth. It is an inestimable privilege if the reader and writer are among those who can say "we see Jesus" (Heb. 2:9). Happy day, blessed hour, when our eyes were first opened to behold Him as the Redeemer of our souls. Oh, to behold Him more distinctly and devotedly. The more we contemplate His peerless person, amazing love, and perfect work, the sooner will sin lose its hold over us, the world its charms, and death be robbed of all terror.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

1 John 1:3

“*And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*” Wondrous and blessed is such an unspeakable privilege. Wonderful it verily is, something entirely peculiar to Christianity, for there is nothing which in the least resembles it in any of the religions of heathendom. Their “*gods*” are one and all regarded as remote, hostile, unrelated to their worshippers – viewed with horror rather than with veneration and delight. Almost the sole idea in the minds of their devotees is to placate their wrath and endeavor to win their favor. The idea of their loving their subjects, and taking them into intimate union and communion, never enters their thoughts. Nor is that to be wondered at. Such an inestimable favor had never entered ours had not the Scriptures clearly revealed this astonishing truth. What an amazing thing it is that the ineffable Holy One should take into fellowship with Himself those who are by nature fallen and depraved creatures, and in practice rebels against Himself. Oh, my soul, bow in adoration before such a marvel. But most wonderful of all is it that the great God not only desires the company of such, but fits them for and will have them with Him in His immediate presence for all eternity.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

The words in 1 John 1:3a “that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you” brings to our attention how close God was to the apostles. **Using the verses below, show other examples of the relationship the apostles and others had with Christ.**

Luke 24:36-53 John 1:14-18 Acts 1:21-22 Acts 4:20 Col. 2:1-15 2 Pet. 1:16

What is needed on our part to have close fellowship with Christ?

Ex. 33:11-13 Ps. 25:14 Prov. 8:17 Zech. 2:8 John 6:57 John 14:21 John 15:14 Acts 22:7
Eph. 2:18 Phil. 3:10 1 Pet. 5:7 1 John 3:14

1 John 1:4

Now this joy is not to be regarded as a luxury, but rather as a spiritual necessity. We are obligated to be glad in God. It is something more than a sacred privilege, namely a bounden duty unto which we are expressly commanded. “*Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them: let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee*” (Psalm 5:11). “*Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart*” (Psalm 32:11). “*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4). “*Rejoice evermore*” (1 Thess. 5:16). If we do not give unto Him, who is so excellent in Himself and so gracious and beneficial unto us, that esteem which rises to the degree of rejoicing in Him, then we sadly fail in rendering to Him that honor which is His due. Our thoughts and valuation of Him are utterly unworthy unless they bring us so to delight ourselves in Him as to fill us with joy. While we seek God’s favor in Christ, live in obedience to His will, and rest in His love, we are warranted to keep a holy feast continually.

It is certainly not the revealed will of Christ that His followers should walk through this world in a spirit of dejection: rather are they a reproach unto Him if they do so. One chief reason why the Lord Jesus uttered His high priestly prayer in the presence of His disciples was that they might be filled with comfort and good cheer: “*These things speak I in the world [in order] that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves*” (John 17:13). He was about to leave them and return to the Father, and He would dispel their sorrow and fill them with holy gladness by apprehensions of His joy. And of what did that consist? First, the realization that He had glorified the Father in the place where He had been so grievously slighted (John 17:1). Second, that He had finished the work given Him to do (John 17:4). Third, that He was about to return to that ineffable glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). Christ was rejoicing at the prospect before Him, and He would have His disciples make His joy theirs. We are to rejoice in a triumphant Savior who completed the work of our redemption. We are to rejoice in the blessed fact that the head once crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now. The knowledge of this should banish all gloom and fill us with joy unspeakable.

Yet further, Christ has made the most gracious provision for the joy of His people in the gift of the Comforter. When His disciples were dismayed and dejected at the prospect of His departure, we find that again and again He reassured and cheered them by the promise of the Holy Spirit. “*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*” (John 14:18), which He did in a most blessed manner on the day of Pentecost. Then it was that their sorrow was “*turned into joy.*” The Comforter is here not only to convict of sin and bring souls unto repentance, but, following that operation, to fill them with gladness and to experience “*joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:17). This He does by opening and blessing the Word, by taking of the things of Christ and showing the same unto them, by witnessing with their spirits that they are the sons of God, by producing in them the spirit of praise. The blessed Spirit uses the words of Christ, especially those of John 17, to work upon the renewed mind, giving it some blessed apprehensions of the joy of which Christ is both the object and the subject, of the joy which comes from Him and centers in Him, bringing us into communion with the same and making our souls realize the satisfying portion we have in Him.

A word now on the nature of this joy. That is the more necessary since not a few are apt to naturalize and carnalize the same, regarding it as a mere spirit of elation or happy feeling of exhilaration. Instead, it is a heavenly grace, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and therefore something spiritual, supernatural, and divine. God is alike its Author, Object and Maintainer. As the peace which He gives *“passeth all understanding”* (Phil. 4:7), so the joy He communicates is said to be *“unspeakable”* (1 Peter 1:8)—not only excelling sense, but beyond full comprehension. It is an elevation of soul after the Lord and of things above. It is a delighting ourselves in God, for since all happiness be the enjoyment of the chief good, then all felicity is bound up in Him. Joy is heaven begun in the saint, for a blessedness here and hereafter differs not in kind but only in degree. It is therefore a joy which is pure and unalloyed. As spiritual love is far more than a sentiment, as God’s peace is more excellent than mere placidity or tranquility of mind, so the joy which Christ imparts to the believer is vastly superior to any natural emotion. It is a state of exultation, a complacency of heart, a full satisfaction of soul as it feasts upon a perfect Object.

Spiritual joy results from the heart’s being engaged with the Lord: *“My soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in His salvation”* (Psalm 35:9). *“Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips”* (Psalm 63:3, 5). We rejoice that all our sins are forgiven, that we are accepted in the Beloved, that we are made the friends of God, that our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, that we have a building of God eternal in the heavens. Such a joy is something to which the natural man is a total stranger: *“Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased”* (Psalm 4:7)—the love of God and His goodness to us in Christ affords a pleasure and a satisfaction which no creature can. Spiritual joy is a very different thing from mere exuberance of spirits or ecstatic feelings, being entirely a holy and supernatural experience. No matter what may be his circumstances in this world, the Christian has ground and matter for rejoicing at all times, and is called upon to do so *“evermore”* being assured *“your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”* (John 16:22).

In view of what has been pointed out in the last two paragraphs, the Christian reader should more readily perceive the radical difference there is between natural hilarity and spiritual joy. The former is incapable of rising above the woes of earth. It wanes in the presence of life’s hardships. Its bloom departs when the sun of prosperity is beclouded. It cannot survive the loss of health or of loved ones. Vastly different is the joy of the Lord. It is restricted neither to surroundings nor temperaments, and fluctuates not with our varying moods or circumstances. Nature may indeed assert itself, as Christ wept by the grave of Lazarus, yet its possessor can say with Paul, *“as sorrowful yet always rejoicing.”* When the hurricane lashes the surface of the sea, the heart of it is undisturbed. Grace enables us to glory even in tribulations (Romans 5:3). While the bodies of the martyrs were burning at the stake, hallelujahs were on their lips. Joy is quite consistent with godly sorrow, for each fresh discovery of the worthlessness of self should lead us closer to God.

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy [and “ours”] may be full.” A common desire animated and regulated the apostles: to promote the glory of their Master and the good of His people—the two things being inseparably connected. They had themselves experienced the unspeakable blessing and blessedness of intimate fellowship with Christ, and the bliss which ever accompanies it, and therefore they longed that their fellow saints should, according to their measure, freely and fully participate in the same. They desired that their converts should be bright and buoyant Christians, whose hearts would rise above the trials and troubles of this life, rejoicing in the Lord, finding their satisfying and everlasting portion in Him. Accordingly, they one and all, in both their oral and written ministry, employed themselves in setting forth the person and perfections, the offices and work, the Lordship and example, of the Christ of God, knowing full well that it was only by means of a spiritual knowledge of His excellency, an interest in His salvation, the maintaining of a close walk and daily communion with Him, that fullness of joy would be experienced in the souls of those whose welfare they had so much at heart.

Those words *“that your joy may be full”* were not penned by an inexperienced visionary or youthful dreamer, aglow with an enthusiasm which would shortly be dampened by bitter disillusionment. Instead, they were written by a very aged person who was thoroughly acquainted with the dark side of life, with the sins and sorrows which beset a Christian, and who knew that it was through *“much tribulation”* that any entered into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). But it was to no mere natural emotion he had reference—an exuberance of spirit suited only to high festivals, an enthusiasm raised to the point of excitement. Radically different is the spiritual joy which he had in view. This is a Divine grace communicated to and situate in the depths of the soul, which the storms of this world cannot reach. It is something which is suited to everyday life and work, for it is a calm and serene frame of mind as well as a happy state of heart. Far more was implied than actually expressed in John’s language, for where fullness of joy exists there is a separation from the world, a close fellowship with God in Christ, a treading of wisdom’s ways, and thus the Lord is honored and His people helped.

How few ministers could warrantably say, *“These things preach we unto you that your joy may be full!”* What numbers of them are almost for ever talking about the increased wickedness which is in the world, the likelihood of another war, the menace of the atom bomb, or the waning spirituality of the churches—things that tend to horrify rather than edify, to depress rather than delight their hearers. Many others confine themselves very largely to a dwelling upon the shortcomings and failures of God’s people as though it were most desirable for them to cherish doubts and fears. Others are all for the performance of duty and discharge of obligations which, if stressed disproportionately, can but promote a proud and legal spirit. There is so very little of that preaching of Christ, which draws out the renewed heart unto Him,

which leads to a closer walking and more intimate communing with Him, and which not only fills the saints with joy but at the same time instills a deep abhorrence of sin and inspires a stronger desire to honor and please Him.

Even when a Christian is well assured of his salvation he may dim and dampen the joy of it by failing to walk as a child of the light (Eph. 5:8). To do so he must cast off *"unfruitful works of darkness,"* so far and so soon as he discovers them to be such. God hates sin, and sent His Son to save us from our sins. If then we turn again to folly, yield to the lusts of the flesh, and *"allow"* evil in our hearts and lives, then the Holy One will withdraw from us the light of His countenance. Yet even in this case He has made most gracious provision for our immediate and complete restoration to the knowledge of His favor and the joy of His smile: *"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). The moment any emotion, thought or deed is revealed to us as a sin, we should penitently confess the same and then rejoice in the divine declaration that the blood of Christ has washed away all the stain of it. Thus if we live up to our holy privilege, not even our sins should cloud the sunshine of God's love or destroy the happy consciousness that He dwells in us and we in Him.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

What are some reasons for falling short of that same joy the apostles had?

John 15:11 John 16:24 Acts 13:52 2 John 1:12

1 John 1:5

"God is indefinable, because to define is to limit, and to speak of limiting infinitude is an absurdity. Names are ascribed to God in Scripture, and attributes, yet they convey only some faint notions of His exalted perfections; but sufficient is revealed to preserve the mind from vain imaginations or gross conceptions of His Being. Man knows nothing of God, and can know nothing, except what He has revealed. In condescension to our capacity God has revealed Himself under names and notions which may best strike our senses—the channel of our reasonings and the medium by which we know" (A. Serle). Three statements are made (we dare not call them definitions) concerning what God is in Himself, which, for want of better terms, may be said to tell us something of His nature or character, and they should be reverently pondered in the order in which they occur in Scripture: *"God is spirit"* (John 4:24), *"God is light"* (1 John 1:5), *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8).

"God is light" expresses all the excellence and glory of Deity. It is to be taken in its widest sense, as including the divine essence and the three Persons therein, for though the Father be primarily in view, yet the Son and the Spirit are equally possessed of the divine nature, and therefore are equally *"light."* *"God is light"* is a word to search and awe us, for we *"were sometimes darkness"* (Eph. 5:8), such being our woeful condition by nature. But it is also a word to gladden and warm us, for light shines for the benefit of others, as darkness is wrapped up in itself. Thus there is the Gospel in this word, for it tells us that Deity has been pleased to reveal and make Himself known unto men. "Light maketh all things visible on which it falls and from which it is reflected, but it becomes itself visible only in a radiant point or disc, like that of the sufferable sun, from which it floods the world. So God is unknown except in the person of Christ" (G. Smeaton). That is why Christ designated Himself *"the light of the world"* and why prophesy pointed to Him as *"the Sun of righteousness"* (Mal. 4:2), for where He is unknown, men *"sit in darkness"* and *"in the region and shadow of death"* (Matt. 4:16).

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

In v. 5 John tells us that God is light and there is no darkness in Him. **We ask that you write down those holy characteristics that naturally emanate from One who not only walks in light, but actually is Light. (For instance, speak concerning His glory, His self-revealing, etc.)**

How does the light penetrate our corrupt nature and is there anything we can do to make the light more penetrable?

Show how David knew the importance of having God's light shine in his life.

Ps. 139:1-4, 12

Light is a symbol of God's omnipresence, for it is diffused throughout all creation, scattering its rays everywhere. In like manner, *"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord "* (Jer. 23:24), which made the Psalmist exclaim, *"Where can I go from Your spirit? or where can I flee from Your presence"* (139:7). "Light is on the hill and in the valley, on sea and on land, in the city and in the desert. With its crystal fingers it clasps the round earth, and throws its mantle of brightness over all worlds" (Palmer).

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

1 John 1:6

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him." Here is a lofty avowal supposed. *"If we say"* is a common mode of speaking in Scripture to express a definite affirmation or profession, as in *"but now ye say, We see"* (John 9:41), *"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?"* (James 2:14); *"He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar"* (1 John 2:4), where in each instance, as here, the declaration is proved to be an idle boast. It is a bare assertion without any corresponding reality. There is a radical difference between profession and possession. To *"have fellowship with God"* presupposes regeneration and reconciliation unto Him. To state that we have fellowship with God is tantamount to claiming that we are His children, to be partakers of the Divine nature, to be delivered from this present evil world, and that we belong to that company whose desire and determination it is to please and glorify Him. To have fellowship with God means that our affections are set upon things above, that we bask in the light of His countenance.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

Explain why our walk should be voluntary, continually progressive, and a practical expression of who we are.

1 John 1:7

John has hardly started his letter before two deep crimson shades cover all the page, the one the dark stain of sin, the other the precious blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This is the great fact back of Easter and the resurrection: the cross of Calvary, the death of Jesus Christ, the life so divine, so human, so beautiful, laid down in sacrifice and self-surrender—not only as an example of submission and resignation, teaching us how to die, but a ransom for the guilty and a satisfaction to the righteousness of God for the sins of men. With all his deep insight into the spirit and life of Jesus, John, above all the disciples, recognized the sacrificial meaning of His blood. "Look, the Lamb of God" (John 1:36), seems to ring out as the undertone of all his beautiful gospel. "The blood of Jesus" (1 John 1:7), is the background of his epistle. "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5), is the keynote of the oft-repeated redemption song of his sublime Apocalypse. The blood of Jesus Christ just means His life, with all its infinite value given as a substitute and ransom for our forfeited life.

Now it is not enough for us to appreciate in a sentimental way the sufferings of our Lord and weep in sympathy over His shame and agony—all this we may do over some pathetic story of human sorrows; all this we may do under the spell of moving eloquence, and yet know nothing of the power of Christ's blood. The death of Christ stands for a great and potential fact, and it is of no value to us until faith enters into partnership with Him in that fact, and knows by personal appropriation "the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). The death of Christ simply means for me that when He died I died; and in God's view I am now as if I had been executed for my own sin and am now recognized as another person who has risen with Christ and is justified from his former sins because he has been executed for them, "Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). Not only so, it is the secret of my sanctification, for in that cross of Calvary, I, the sinful self, was put to death; and when I lay myself over with Him upon that cross, and reckon myself dead, Christ's risen life passes into me, and it is no longer my struggling, my goodness or my badness, but my Lord who lives in me, and through whom, while I abide in Him, I am counted even as He and enabled to walk even as He walked.

Beloved, have you entered into the death of Christ and counted it yours, and through it are you now alive unto Him in "the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10)?

(The Christ In the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

What are some of the hymns you sing that bring out the theme of the cleansing power of the blood.

1 John 1:8-10

Perhaps no portion of the New Testament has so many seeming contradictions on the subject of holiness as the first epistle of John. For example, we are told in the first chapter, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8), and again, "If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (1:10). And yet a little later we are told with equal emphasis that "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God" (3:9). Now how can these be reconciled? It is all very simple. First it is true that we—that is, the human we—have sin and have sinned. There is no good in us, and we have renounced ourselves as worthless and helpless; but on the other hand, we have taken Him to be our life and His life is a sinless one. The seed that He plants in us, as spotless as that beautiful bulb and blossom which you plant in the unclean soil, but which grows up as pure as an angel's wing unstained by the soil around it belongs to another element and is in its own nature essentially and inherently pure.

The key to this whole mystery is supplied by two verses in this epistle. "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning" (3:6). Here is the secret of holiness—it is not our holiness but Him. There is no account made here of our perfection, but it is only as we cling to Him and draw our life each moment from Him that we are kept from sin. It is the indwelling life.

Again, "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him" (5:18). Here again the same truth is expressed in a different way. The only begotten Son of God, dwelling in us, keeps us from the power of sin and the assaults of Satan; and although the devil often strikes, yet we are like the little insect with the pane of glass between it and the bird of prey, "and the evil one cannot harm him" (5:18).

There is one more passage which belongs to this connection. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (5:12). Here it is our union with the person of the Lord Jesus that constitutes the source of our spiritual life. The secret therefore which Paul had found, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), is the secret also of the disciple who leaned yet closer on the Master's breast. God grant that it may be the secret of our life, too, and that we may know in all of His fullness the life eternal, the life manifested, and the life crucified, the resurrection life, and the life indwelling, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

(The Christ In the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Using other scriptures, including Romans 6:8-14, Romans 7:14-25 and 1 John 2:1-4, how do you make sense of the following scriptures in 1 John that appear to be contradictory:

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

1 John 3:9: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."

It is indeed the sincere desire and endeavor of every real child of God to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing and be fruitful in every good work (Col. 1:10), but to eradicate his carnal nature is altogether beyond him: "*Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*" (Prov. 20:9). But cannot the grace of God effect sinless perfection? "There is no channel for such a grace to run in, no promise in all the Word of God to bottom such a persuasion upon. There is a promise for the subduing of iniquity, but not for the annihilating of it; a promise that sin shall not reign in us, but none that it shall not be. Therefore, the believer would not seek for that in himself which is found only in Christ, nor for that on earth which is reserved for heaven" (E. Polhill, 1675). God leaves sin in His people to wean them from self-love and self-righteousness, and to develop in them the grace of perseverance, through oppositions and temptations from within and without. His power is rendered the more evident in preserving the plant of holiness in a heart so filled with noxious weeds. He would conform them to Christ's sufferings: as He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, so they endure the contradiction of sin against themselves. The compassion of our great High Priest is demonstrated in bearing with our infirmities.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

1 John 2:1-2

"*Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*" (1 Tim. 3:16). Not only so in connection with the two natures united in the person of the God-man Mediator, but also in regard to the two opposing natures which at present exist in all those on earth who are members of His mystical body. This it is which alone casts light upon the strange conflict which is being ceaselessly waged within them, and which explains many a paradox in Holy Writ. A forceful example of the latter is found in the first chapter of our epistle. In it "The apostle seems to have said both that believers are free from sin and also that they have sin (verses 7 and 8); that they cannot sin and yet that they do sin (verses 6, 10). The explanation is that these verses contain the antithesis of Christian experience. In all realms there are apparent contradictions. Night is a contradiction of day, winter a contradiction of summer, and infancy is at the antipodes of old age" (Levi Palmer). The same antithesis of Christian experience, or contradictory elements, is brought forward into 2:1, where the apostle declares, "*My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not,*" yet at once adds "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.*"

Admire the blessed balance of Truth there, and observe the order in which it is presented. There is no turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness by making light of sin, but a forbidding of us to commit any. "*Sin not*" needs to be turned into fervent prayer: "*Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not*" (Psalm 17:5). "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*" "*Cleanse Thou me from secret [unsuspected] faults*" (Psalm 19:12). But more, "*sin not*" is to be made our firm and fixed resolution. So far from complacently expecting to fail, we must do as the Psalmist did: "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee*" (Psalm 119:11). That is the use we are to make of God's Word: to get it deeply rooted in our affections, so that holy conduct will result from it, and that we may be able to bear testimony: "*by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*" (Psalm 17:4). It must also be our diligent endeavor: "*Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*" (Acts 24:16).

What does it mean to have an advocate with the Father and on what basis are the charges dismissed against us?

1 John 2:3-6

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6) That is supplementary to verses 3-5, completing what is set forth therein. The *"he that saith"* intimates that it is the testing of profession which is still in view—here a yet severer and more searching trial is made. First, a saving knowledge of God must be demonstrated by a keeping of His commandments. Then the scope of our subjection unto God is enlarged upon, by showing it includes the keeping of His *"Word"*—a being regulated by the entire written revelation He has given us, regarding every jot and tittle in it as of Divine authority. Now the nature of that obedience is defined. A mere outward compliance with the divine precepts, no matter how punctilious and comprehensive it be, is not sufficient: we are required to walk even as Christ walked—to be regulated by the same principles, actuated by the same motives, directed unto the same ends as His were. Thus this verse describes the kind of obedience which is necessary in order to our having fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Walking in the light is not enough: it must be such a walking as marked that of the Lord Jesus.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

Why does A. W. Pink say "walking in the light is not enough"?

1 John 2:7-11

"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples," said Christ, *"if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:35). And as the example of Christ so plainly exhibited, love is very much more than a nebulous ideal or flowery expression, being an intensely practical thing; more than a beautiful sentiment, namely a mighty force and impelling dynamic. The followers of Christ are required to love one another for His sake, as bearing His image, and as imitating the copy He set before them of compassionate, patient, disinterested affection. They are to have a genuine regard to each other's interests and comforts, a sympathy with their sorrows and a part in their joys. They are to delight in one another's company, to live in peace and harmony, to bear and forbear with each other's frailties. They are to unite together in prayer and worship, to bear each other's burdens, to spare no pains in seeking to build them up in faith and holiness. This new commandment is to be kept for ever fresh in the hearts and minds of the saints.

But there are many other respects in which the old commandment is now a new one. It is given to a new society or corporation, the Christian, *"brotherhood"* (1 Peter 2:17). It has received a new exemplification in the Head of that corporation, being abundantly and perfectly realized in Him who *"loved the Church and gave Himself for it."* It is addressed unto those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and therefore are they to love one another for His sake. Thus it is kept from a new principle or nature, received at regeneration. It has come to them with a new power: under the old covenant it was inscribed upon tables of stone, but the Spirit writes it on the hearts of those who are under the new covenant, and it was for this reason that Paul said to the saints, *"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"* (1 Thess. 4:9). It is invested with new force, even the mediatorial authority of Christ, who, after His resurrection from the dead, was given all power in heaven and in earth, and *"gave commandments unto the apostles"*(Acts 1:2). It is to be obeyed in a new manner, according to its multiform application in the precepts found in the Epistles, which are given for the directing of brotherly love.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

This love taught in the Word was never seen until Jesus came, because it was born of God. It is the kind of love that transcends passion, human bonds, and even loves its enemies. This love cannot be expressed in words only, but is found in acts which return good for evil, and also in self-giving for the sake of others regardless of personal cost or pain. **Can you give a short illustration of this kind of love that you've experienced or know about in another person's life?**

1 John 2:12-14

But what are we to understand by *"ye are strong"*? Through using the means of grace, by increased spiritual knowledge, by appropriating the strength which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1), through exercising the graces of the new man, by improving (profiting from) the varied experiences through which they had passed, and by the assisting operations of the Spirit, they had developed from babes into a higher spiritual stature and were better able to use their spiritual

muscles. It is written, *"They that wait upon the Lord [which refers not so much to an act, but is descriptive of an attitude taken by all the regenerate who are in a healthy condition] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isaiah 40:31). It is indeed true that the believer's strength, like his righteousness, is in the Lord, yet as there is an imparted righteousness (1 John 2:29), so also a communicated strength. David acknowledged, Thou *"strengthenest me with strength in my soul"* (Psalm 138:3), so that he was no longer feeble in himself. There is such a thing as outgrowing spiritual babyhood and weakness, though not continued dependence upon the Lord. There is such an experience as going on *"from strength to strength"* (Psalm 84:7) and being able to do all things through Christ strengthening us (Phil. 4:13). But as increased holiness is accompanied by increased realization of our filthiness, so increased strength makes us more conscious of our weakness.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

What is the meaning of 1 John 2:14? Are they speaking of physical or spiritual strength?

Ps. 17:4 Ps. 119:9, 25, 28 Mark 4:15 John 1:1 John 5:38 Eph. 6:16-17 Col. 3:16 1 John 2:18-26
Rev. 19:13

1 John 2:15-17

The Bible uniformly condemns the world. Again and again Christ and His apostles indicted and warned the saints against it. When the Son of God became incarnate and tabernacled among men, *"the world knew Him not"* (John 1:10); yea, He declared, *"Me it hateth"* (John 7:7). He insisted that the whole world was of less value than a man's soul (Matt. 16:26). He intimated that its cares and the deceitfulness of riches were the thorns which choked the Word and made its hearer unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). He solemnly said, *"Woe unto the world because of offences"* (Matt. 18:17). He announced that Satan was its prince (John 14:30). In reference to the Holy Spirit He stated, *"whom the world cannot receive"* (John 14:7). He averred, *"I pray not for the world"* (John 17:9). He *"gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world"* (Gal. 1:4), and therefore are His people forbidden to be conformed to it (Romans 12:2). The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 3:19). *"Ungodliness and worldly lusts"* are linked together (Titus 2:12). 2 Peter 2:20 mentions *"the pollutions of the world,"* while 1 John 5:19 informs us that *"the whole world lieth in wickedness."* "Such declarations as these are radically opposed to all the beliefs and philosophies of men.

The divine precepts ought to be as highly esteemed by us as God's promises; and if they be not, something is seriously wrong with our hearts. They are as much an integral part of God's Word, are accorded a place of quite as much prominence, are revealed by the same Spirit, and rest upon the same foundation. They proceed from the self-same love, and are designed equally for our good. When God gave His commandments unto Israel, it was that, by their obedience, *"it might be well with them, and with their children"* (Deut. 5:29). The perceptive part of the Gospel is designed to be our director in the path of filial obedience, the rule of our duty, and the standard at which our love is ever to aim. If it be true that God is glorified by our faith as we trust Him to fulfil His pledges, it is none the less a fact that He is honored by our submission as we cheerfully keep His statutes. And if it be true that our hearts are strengthened and our lives enriched by laying hold of feeding upon God's promises, it is equally the case that we are greatly the gainers by cherishing and heeding His precepts. *"His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good"* (Deut. 10:13). Walking according to God's Law is the only way to true happiness (Psalm 119:1).

What has just been pointed out receives illustration in connection with our observing the precept of 1 John 2:15. It is both our wisdom and our welfare to comply with the prohibition, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,"* for, as a whole and in all its parts, it is the deadly enemy of God's children. One of the distinctive properties of the Bible is that all its precepts are directed unto our affections. They are not intended to fashion the mere external, but are meant to mold the inner man. Satan is well aware of that, and therefore he is ever seeking to turn our affections away from God and wed them to the world. The very fact that we are enjoined, *"Love not the world"* intimates that its supreme assaults are upon the heart. It is only by heeding this commandment that we shall be delivered from the world's fatal snares. It is therefore a matter of the deepest practical moment that we walk in separation from this deadly menace to spirituality, for in proportion as we fail to do so will there be a forfeiting of God's smile and the loss of peace of conscience. Any measure of love of the world will stunt our growth, deprive us of joy in the Holy Spirit, undermine our assurance, and bring down upon us the chastening rod of God.

That is God's design in regeneration: *"I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes"* (Ezek. 36:27). But though the Christian has renounced the world, with its God-defying and self-pleasing ways, yet for the enjoyment of communion with God in Christ, and to avoid the grieving of His Spirit, he needs to be continually on his guard that the world does not again possess his heart, for not only is it all around him, but its dominating principle (the *"flesh"*) is still within him—a deputy to do its evil work. By nature we were wedded to the world, thoroughly entangled in its vanities, and naught but love to God and heavenly things delivers the heart from its thralldom. It is indeed a most humbling thing that believers should be told to *"love not the world,"* yet they require that injunction, and ought to turn the same into earnest prayer, daily seeking grace that they may be Divinely enabled to decline its temptations and to mortify their desires after its carnal attractions, remembering that by the cross of Christ the world is (legally) crucified unto them

and they unto the world (Gal. 6:14). If we diligently endeavor to cultivate a spirit of contentment with the temporal portion which God has given us, however small a one it be, then we shall be delivered from lusting after the husks which the swine feed on.

It is altogether unreasonable for any man to look for satisfaction in anything which this world has to offer him, for how can material and transient things meet the needs of a soul that has been made for eternity? No real, still less any lasting, good is to be found in this world. Abundant proof of that is supplied by the book of Ecclesiastes. There we have placed upon imperishable record the experiences of one who was permitted to gratify every lust of the flesh. The resources at his command were practically limitless. He was a king, and not a poor one, but possessed of abundant means, so that he was able to procure everything that money could purchase. He surrounded himself with every conceivable luxury, form of pleasure, and object of beauty. His palace was filled unstintingly with everything the senses could crave. And what was the outcome? Was he able to say, "*All is very good, I can now rest in the enjoyment of what I have acquired*"? Very far from it. After he had taken his fill of all its pleasures, drunk deeply from all this world's streams, he declared that "*all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*" And, my reader, if Solomon could find no satisfaction in all his worldly possessions and pursuits, none who comes after him will ever do so.

Since God's commandments be designed for our good, a careless neglect of them cannot but be harmful. In proportion as we imbibe the spirit of the world, our breathings after God are stifled and the soul becomes dull in holy duties. As one cannot handle pitch without soiling oneself, neither can a believer take a deep interest in the politics of the world without suffering loss spiritually. Conversely, the more we delight ourselves in the Lord, the less relish shall we have for the things on which the unregenerate set their hearts. The two things work in inverse ratio: love to God weans the soul from love to the world. Now the outstanding evidence of love is obedience: a fixed resolve to please Christ in all things. As He declared, "*If a man love Me, he will keep My words*" (John 14:23). Then how fervently should we pray for more love to Him (Eph. 3:17, 18; Phil. 1:9). How we should meditate daily upon His manifold perfections and feast on His excellency. How diligently we should cultivate a closer and more constant communion with Him. How we should keep short accounts with God, and make a practice of promptly confessing every known sin. How we should discipline ourselves and love the creature in subordination to Him.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

Have you yourself been tempted by an opportunity to gain one of the following: Worldly offerings of satisfying the flesh; a chance to really make money, or a chance to be powerful and affect many people? If you did succumb to any one (or more) of these, what was the end result? Can any of these satisfy? Look up the following Scriptures to find the end results:

Micah 2:10 John 8:44 Rom. 7:5 Rom. 8:7 Rom. 13:14 Gal. 5:19-21 Gal. 5:24 Gal. 6:8 Gal. 6:12, 13 Eph. 2:3 Heb. 11:13, 16 2 Pet. 2:10

Jesus plainly taught "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." (Matt 6:24) **Why is it so important that we decide to follow Christ and not follow a course in the world? What are the consequences if we decide to make a compromise of the two?**

Matt. 10:37 Rev. 3:14-22

1 John 2:18-19

An "*antichrist*" is an antagonist of Christ and a corrupter of His doctrine. From those words "*ye have heard that antichrist shall come,*" it is clear that the saints of those days, even the youngest of them, were taught to expect that, so far from Christianity making a speedy and complete conquest of the world, there would be fierce opposition against it; that the servants and followers of Christ would be no more acceptable to the unregenerate than was their Master. Yet it must not be supposed that they were entertained with a cheap sensationalism under the guise of "*expounding prophecy,*" but rather were they informed that it was God's will that the enmity which He put between the serpent's seed and Christ's seed would continue until the end. Therefore they must be prepared to encounter false prophets, and persecution if they withstood them. Implicitly, this "*ye have heard that antichrist shall come*" was a solemn and urgent exhortation unto believers to contend earnestly for the Faith, and to instruct new converts in the duty of watchfulness against deceivers.

Nor is there any need for us to say much upon the "*many antichrists*" of the apostle's day, the chief reference being to the Gnostics and to such men as Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). In view of the faithful instruction and warnings which Christians were then receiving from the ministers of God, there was no excuse for any of them being taken unawares and imposed upon. But alas, how sadly were such warnings generally disregarded it is only too evident from history. The Christ-hated doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14, 15), and the suffering of one who called herself a prophetess to seduce His servants (2:20) were the precursors of many others in the next three hundred years, and by the close of the sixth century almost the whole of Christendom was as completely deceived as though God had given no warning against the antichrist, and for almost a thousand years there followed what are known as the "*dark ages.*"

Explain what an antichrist is.

John 8:19 John 14:6 John 17:3 Col. 3:17 1 Pet. 2:5 1 Pet. 3:18

What is the relationship between the Antichrist and antichrists? Can one be explained as an individual and the other as an evil system?

How will the spirit of the Antichrist try to make people question their faith? What will keep us from being deceived?

Ps. 36:9 John 10:4-5 John 17:17 1 Cor. 2:16 1 Cor. 8:1 2 Cor. 4:6 Phil 1:10 1 Thess. 1:5 1 John 2:22-23 1 John 4:1-3 1 John 5:20 Rev. 2:4

1 John 2:20-21

Christian knowledge is an operative one, for it is not a species of information which adds to our mental store, but an inspiration that stirs the soul unto action. However scriptural be the notions possessed by the natural man, they exert no sanctifying influence upon him, and yield no godliness of character and conduct. His light is like that of the moon: it quickens not, nor produces fruit; however orthodox, it leaves the heart cold and barren. Whereas the light which the blessed Spirit communicates is like that of the sun: it not only illumines the understanding, but it searches the conscience, moves the will, and sets the heart on fire for God. His teaching is dynamical, having a vitalizing effect upon the whole of the inner man, stirring its subject unto holy endeavors. Spiritual knowledge is intensely practical, altering the disposition, producing obedience, conforming unto Christ.

There are multitudes in Christendom today of whom it must be said that they are *“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth”* (2 Tim 3:7). They are not only regular attenders upon preaching, but many of them are even engaged in running around to one special *“meeting”* or *“communion”* to another, read much religious literature and have their heads stored with a mass of undigested theological details, yet arrive not an experiential, practical, humbling, operative and transforming acquaintance with the things of God. And why is this? Because they have never received an anointing from the Holy One: that is what makes all the difference! But that anointing gives the regenerate a supernatural and sanctifying realization of the Truth. Not that they know as fully as they ought, or so as to preclude their duty of a diligent application on their part to make further progress therein. While they only *“know in part”* (1 Cor. 13:9), and a very small part, yet they know it in a spiritual and saving way.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

There are an untold number of people alive today, who, upon being questioned, reply that they are “trying to be good enough and this should give them assurance of entering heaven upon their death!” **Here write in a few sentences how you would reply to these “blinded” ones if they were willing to listen.**

1 John 2:22-26

The Messiahship of Christ is not an isolated fact: lying behind it is the all-important truth of the Holy Trinity. The denial of Christ is, at the same time, a repudiation of the mysterious and ineffable union which there is between the members of the Godhead. There is a most intimate and unique relation subsisting between the Father and the Son, one which is entirely beyond finite comprehension expressed in such terms as *“the man . . . My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts”* (Zech. 13:7), so that *“all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father”* (John 5:23), for, as He expressly declared, *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30) – co-essential, co-eternal, co-glorious; *“His own Son”* (Romans 8:32) in a way that the regenerate are not: really, though incomprehensibly, *“His own Son.”* Now unless Christ be owned in this highest relation, He is virtually denied in all. Scripture presents the Father and the Son in eternity past, as engaged in mutual council (Zech. 6:13). *“A great covenant is negotiated. The Father and the Son, with the Spirit, are, if one may dare say so, in solemn conference together. From the bosom of the Father, in which He is dwelling evermore, the Son receives a commission to come forth.*

“He is appointed Heir of all things. Creation is assigned to Him as His proper work. All providence is to be His care; and, above all, the providence of this spot of earth. Here on this earth, from among a fallen race, He is to purchase for Himself, and for His Father, at a great price, a seed given Him by the Father, and to share with Him the blessedness of the Holy Spirit being a party to the arrangement, as He is to have a large share in carrying it out. And so, accordingly, in the fullness of time, the Son appears among men. He appears as the Son: on the Father’s behalf, entrusted with His Father’s commission, to be about His Father’s business. He is the Son not merely in respect of His being the Holy Jesus, receiving proofs and pledges of God’s fatherly presence and approval, as any holy being might. He is the Son also, and

chiefly, in respect of the work or office with a view to which He is the Christ. He is the Son consenting to be the Father's Servant, and as such anointed for the accomplishment of the Father's purpose. Only, therefore, in so far as you acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, do you really receive Him as the Son.

"And denial, whether practical or doctrinal, of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, is tantamount to a disowning of His personality as the Son. It is only when you recognize Him as anointed to do His Father's will in the sacrifice of Himself, that you really own Him as the Son. Such, then, is the importance and significance of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, considered in itself; and such its bearing on the owning of His person as the Savior and as the Son. It is a proposition which so vitally affects the essential character of Him to whom it relates, that the denial of it is virtually a denial of Himself . . . For, in a word, the completeness of this illustrious personage depends on a full and adequate recognition of His double relation: to us as sinners, as our Jesus; and to God the Father, as His Son. Set aside His being Christ: the anointed Sacrificer and anointed the sin of the world . . . and we have neither any Jesus fit to be our Savior, nor any Son of God worth the owning . . . Hence he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ is not only a liar: he is antichrist. And being antichrist—setting himself against the Christ—he, as antichrist, denies the Father and the Son" (R. Candlish).

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

Why is it so important to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ and what will happen to those that are not concerned about acknowledging He is the Christ?

John 3:18

1 John 2:27-29

The apostle was engaged in warning professing Christians against false teachers who desire to corrupt them, yea, who had already prevailed with many of their company (verses 18, 19). He had shown them up in their true colors, denouncing them as antichrists and liars (verse 22). He had exhorted the saints to hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end (verse 24). He had reminded them of the grand promise given for their encouragement (verse 25). Then he assured the regenerate that the anointing which they had received from Christ was no mere temporary benefit, but one which would remain in them as an incorruptible principle of life and light, supplying them with such spiritual discernment as no human teaching could impart. That "*anointing*" consisted, as we have seen, of the gift of the Holy Spirit and His saving grace. It is the Spirit as an illuminator and instructor which is here singled out for particular mention. He teaches nothing but infallible Truth, without the slightest mixture of error. He teaches "*of all things*:" that is, all things essential unto our ingrafting into and continuation in Christ—the essential and fundamental things of the Gospel, whatever be requisite for our obedience to Christ and communion with Him. That all believers are taught, however ignorant they be in matters of lesser importance.

Paraphrasing the excellent Owen, we would say that, first, all Divine Truth which is necessary to be known and believed that we may live unto God, abide in Christ, and be preserved from seducers is revealed in the Scriptures (Acts 20:32). Second, but of ourselves we cannot understand the Scriptures unto the ends just specified (1 Cor. 2:14): if we could there would be no need that we should be taught them by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12). Third, by the anointing of the Spirit believers are taught all those things, so that they are enabled to discern, understand and acknowledge them (1 John 2:27). The Spirit is given to Christ's redeemed for this very purpose: that He may graciously and savingly instruct them in the truth of the Gospel by the supernatural enlightening of their minds, causing the soul to cling firmly unto it with love and delight, transforming them in the whole inner man into the image of the same. Thereby it answers to the anointing of the Lord Jesus with the same Spirit which made Him "*of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*" (Isa. 11:3). "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*" (Psalm 25:14). God will not conceal from them the knowledge of His will so far as their salvation is concerned in it, but will teach them the way wherein they should walk if they are to be acceptable to Him.

The general end or design of God in the gift and teaching of the Spirit is to provide for believers remaining steadfast in Christ, and thus verse 27 closes with the emphatic statement, "*and even as it [the anointing] hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.*" Whatever be required in order to maintain communion with Christ all believers are taught. The especial end in view that is here singled out is preservation and deliverance from all antichrists and seducers, with the lies and false doctrines which they propagate against Christ and His Gospel. The only means whereby we may be kept from such pernicious opinions and ways is by an assured knowledge and inward acquaintance with what is revealed in Holy Writ. Truth is the only antidote against error, and none but the Holy Spirit can lead anyone into the life-giving meaning of the Truth and quicken him into real fellowship with the Lord thereby. Those who lack this spiritual, sure and establishing knowledge, possessing but a bare conjectural and theoretical acquaintance with it, are Christians only in name, receiving the Gospel from men in the letter rather than in the substance of it; and, not being rooted and grounded in the faith, are subject to any wind of false doctrine.

Nothing else ensures stability and fidelity. Man's knowledge, skill, or disputing ability is insufficient to preserve from being inveigled with fair pretences or enticed with the cunning sleights of Satan, where he lies in wait to deceive. Yea, as Owen pointed out, "Temptations may come as a storm or tempest, which quickly drives men from their greatest fleshly

confidences. Hence oftentimes those who are forwardest to say, Though all men should forsake the Truth yet would not they do so, are the forwardest upon trial so to do." But this sacred anointing fails none who receive it, and because of it they never fail. First, because His teaching is not merely an external and doctrinal instruction, but an internal and effectual operation. Whereas He makes use indeed of the written Word and teaches nothing but what is revealed therein, He bestows an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and open our eyes so that we may see clearly the wondrous things that are in God's Law. The degree of this knowledge varies considerably, both in the clearness with which divine things are perceived and in the scope or extent of the same, the Spirit acting according to the sovereignty of His will (1 Cor. 12:11); but none who receives His anointing comes short of whatever be necessary to ensure his abiding in Christ.

Second, the Spirit so teaches as to give a love unto and delight in the things that are taught. This is the next principal cause of action and practice, being that which binds together the different means and instruments of our security, rendering them firm and stable. Even though the mind be informed and perceives a duty, if the will and the affections be not wrought upon and won over unto a hearty approbation of the same we shall never conform ourselves unto them in the diligent performance of that duty. That which is done merely from convictions and conscience, without any gladness of heart, will neither be acceptable unto God nor shall we be constant therein. No matter how well instructed we by God's ministers, or what light we personally acquire by study, unless there be genuine love of the Truth and the personal practice thereof it will prove insufficient unto our preservation and the saving profession of it. This is the outstanding characteristic feature of this divine unction: it communicates a delight in the Truth wherein it instructs and promotes a glad obedience to what it requires. When the blessed Spirit by His teaching breathes into the soul a holy and spiritual complacency in the things which are taught, then we taste how gracious the Lord is in them, His Word is rendered sweeter to us than the honeycomb, and we run in the way of His commandments.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (1 John 2:27) **How do you receive God's anointing of the Holy Spirit and what will you receive when you have God's anointing?**

Jer. 31:33-34 John 14:16-17 John 20:22 1 Cor. 2:12 Eph. 1:17-18 Eph. 4:8 1 Thess. 1:5-6 1 Thess. 2:13
Titus 3:5 2 Pet. 1:4

1 John 3:1-3

Consider the inestimable privilege which is here specified: *"that we should be called the sons of God."* The word *"called"* does not here refer to God's making us His children by an effectual or inward call from death unto life, but rather the acknowledging of us to be His children. It is not the act of regeneration which is in view, but the fact of our sonship which is affirmed. *"In Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (Gen. 21:12) means, The children of Isaac shall be regarded and recognized as thy seed. Yea, of Christ Himself after the flesh, it was said to Mary *"that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35), which obviously signifies shall be acknowledged as such, and not made so. Thus it is here: the Father owning the ones born of Christ—mentioned in the previous verse. When the Father calls us His sons, it is not that He bestows the title upon us, but avers that relationship; as in Romans 9:26, where the apostle quotes from Hosea: *"And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God,"* that is, God recognizes none as His children but those born of His Spirit and conformed to the image of His Son. And again, *"If thou . . . call the Sabbath a delight"* (Isa. 58:13)—regard and treat it as such.

This is what we are called upon to behold: the fathomless love of the Father in owning us not merely as His subjects or servants, but as His sons. It is a particular and peculiar relationship which pertains to the regenerate, for it is not a blessing which is common to all men. It originates in the Father's love. It is based upon our union with Christ, our being born of Him. To be a child of God is to be an heir of glory (Romans 8:17), and to be regarded as such by the Father is a confirmation of it. It is a very high honor indeed to sustain this relationship, far, far greater than any which this world can bestow. David asked, *"Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law?"* (1 Sam. 18:23), then what is it to be acknowledged as a son of the King of kings! *"Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee"* (Isaiah 43:4) is His own blessed testimony. What weight should that have with us! What assurance it should convey to our minds! What wonderment it should evoke! Does it not move each of us to admit with the returning prodigal, I am not worthy *"to be called Thy son"* (Luke 15:19)? How it should influence our daily lives: *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us"* (Eph. 5:1, 2).

We must not conclude this chapter without pointing out the principal qualities of the Father's love. It was spontaneous. Nothing outside God Himself moved Him to it. There was nothing in us to attract it, but everything to the contrary (Ezek. 16:5, 6). It was eternal (Jer. 31:3), for God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and entered into an everlasting covenant of grace with Him on our behalf. It was sovereign, selective and discriminating, for

He loves not all; it is peculiar to the elect—“Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that Thou bearest unto Thy people” (Psalm 106:4). It is sacrificial, for God “spared not His own Son” but delivered Him up to the cross in order that sinners might be saved. Christ shed not His blood in order to induce God to love His people: it was because God loved them that He provided such a costly offering for them. It is infinite. There is a depth to it which none can fathom, a height which none can reach, a length and breadth which cannot be measured. It is invincible. “Put not your trust in princes” said the Psalmist, for they will fail you; but God’s love is reliable and cannot be thwarted. It is immutable, knowing no change (Mal. 3:6), being without variableness or shadow of turning. Truly His love is unique.

Equally blessed is it to observe how His love is exercised. Behold His foreordaining love “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children” (Eph. 1:4, 5). Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, shows that election is the fruit of God’s love—likewise does 2 Thess. 2:13, teach us. Behold God’s redeeming love: “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” (1 John 4:9, 10). Behold His regenerating love: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph 2:4, 5). Behold his drawing love: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3), sweetly wooing us unto Himself. Behold His communicating love: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). Behold His comforting love: “even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation” (2 Thess. 2:16). Behold His preserving love: “nothing does or can separate us from it” (Romans 8:38, 39). Thus its manner is as matchless as its nature. A brief word now on the present modification of our enjoyment of God’s love. “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” Though so greatly honored by the Father, that will not bring you into favor with those who are strangers to Him. No matter how lavish He be in the display of His love toward us, the unregenerate will not value us on that account. The natural man is devoid of spiritual discernment, and perceives not that the saints are “the excellent of the earth,” the blessed ones—rather does he regard them as fools and fanatics, who are turning their backs on the happiness of life. But so far from stumbling the Christian, or even discouraging him, it is just what he should expect. Nor will this disesteem be only from the openly godless—it is from professors that the most cruel treatment will come. It was the religious element which persecuted Christ! They perceived not His glory, though it shone constantly before them in His character and conduct, His ministry and miracles; but they were blind, seeing in Him no beauty. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master: to be unknown, despised, opposed, is part of our conformity to Him. The excellency of our sonship is not to be measured by the world’s judgment, for its opinion is worthless. Sufficient for the believer to be assured that the Father loves him, that he has His approbation. Suffer not the slights of godless professors to dim your joy in Him.

(Exposition of First John 1 & 2, A. W. Pink)

How did we become the children of God and are we adopted or natural children?

Matt. 6:26 John 1:12-13 John 20:17 Rom. 8:16-17 Gal. 4:6

1 John 3:4-9

Here and in similar places in this Epistle the Greek verb has the force of a continuous present tense (cp. 3:6, 9; 5:18) and thus denotes a person’s habitual attitude toward sin as expressed in his practice or non-practice of it. John is not speaking of a state of perfection in which it is impossible for a Christian ever to sin; but he is stressing the fact that a Christian cannot keep on practicing sin, because he is born of God.

“Righteousness” (1 John 3:7) means the righteous life which is the result of salvation through Christ. By God’s grace the Christian does righteously because he has been made righteous (Rom. 3:22, Rom. 10:3).

(The New Scofield Reference Bible footnote in 1 John 3)

Christ having risen from the dead now comes to relive His life in us. A constant indulgence in sin contradicts the claim of having a personal relationship with Christ. **What kind of pressure would a Christian be under who does commit habitual sin?**

1 John 3:10-17

Westcott has said, “Life reveals the children of God.” There is no way of telling what a tree is other than by its fruits, and there is no way of telling what a man is other than by his conduct. John strongly states that anyone who does not do righteousness is thereby demonstrated to be not of God. He also declares that to be righteous is to love our brother men.

John also teaches that the Christian must not be like Cain who murdered his brother. He tells us that an evil man will instinctively hate a good man. Righteousness always provokes hostility in the minds of those whose actions are evil. The reason is that the good man is a walking rebuke to the evil man, even if he never speaks a word to him, his life passes a

silent judgment. The hatred of the world for the Christian is an ever-present phenomenon, and it is due to the fact that the worldly man sees in the Christian the condemnation of himself. And because he will not change, he seeks to eliminate the man who reminds him of the lost goodness.

(The Letters of John and Jude, William Barclay -paraphrased)

Christian, if you now know that your walk in Christ is “loathsome” to the non-Christian, and he chooses to stay at a distance from you, what other avenues are open to you from our Lord’s teaching, so that he might eventually be won to the Lord? (Matt. 16:24-27)

How do you interpret 1 John 3:10b: “Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”

1 John 3:18-24

Into the human heart there are bound to come doubts. John’s test is quite simple and far-reaching—it is love. Yes, our hearts sometimes condemn us—that is inevitable. But God is greater than our hearts; He knows all things. Not only does He know our sins; He also knows our love, our longings, the nobility that never fully works itself out, and our penitence. But the greatness of His knowledge gives Him the sympathy which can understand and forgive. It is this very knowledge of God which gives us our hope. Thomas Kempis said, “Man sees the deed, but God knows the intention.” The perfect knowledge which belongs to God, and to God alone, is not our terror but our hope.

John goes on to speak of the two things which are well-pleasing in God’s sight, the two commandments on obedience to which our relationship to God depends. We must believe in the *name of His Son Jesus Christ*. Psalm 124:8 states, “*Our help is in the name of the Lord.*” This means that our help is in the love, mercy and power which have been revealed to us as the nature and character of God, and this is also the very character of Jesus Christ. Secondly, we must love one another, even as He gave us His commandment (John 13:34). This means that we will love each other with that same selfless, sacrificial, forgiving love with which Jesus Christ loved us.

(The Letters of John and Jude, William Barclay - paraphrased)

Write in prayer form, from your heart, your desire and request to the Lord for His ability within you to fully and joyfully obey these commands.

1 John 4:1-3

In the early church that John here speaks of, there was a surging life of the Spirit, which brought its own perils, for there were so many and diverse spiritual manifestations that some kind of test was necessary. People were very conscious of a personal power of evil, though they did not know its source, and they believed that this evil was seeking for the minds of men who might be its instruments. Therefore John bids his people to test the spirits to see whether they really have their source in God, and especially that they confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, or else they were not of God, but the antichrist.

For John, Christian belief could be summed up in one great sentence: “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). Any spirit that denied the reality of the incarnation was not of God and would deny all the promises of God that the Jewish people had clung to.

John rightfully taught that to deny the reality of the incarnation had the following serious consequences: 1) It is to deny that Jesus can ever be our example; 2) it is to deny that Jesus can be the true High Priest who opens the way to God; 3) it is to deny that Jesus can in any real sense be Savior; 4) it is to deny the salvation of the body; and 5) it is to deny that there can ever be any real union between God and men. Nothing in Christianity is more central than the reality of the manhood of Jesus Christ. John further clarified that the false spirits were of the world; they speak as of the world and the world hears them; and they do not hear us who are of God.

(The Letters of John and Jude, William Barclay -paraphrased)

Is there any need for us to fear the heretics? We know that the powers of evil did their worst to Christ, even to killing Him on a Cross, but in the end He emerged victorious—and did He not purchase that victory for us in His death and resurrection? Here speak to the fact of knowing truth, and clinging to it. And, lastly, how well do you agree with this statement: “The truth is that by which men live; error is ultimately that for which men die?”

1 John 4:4-6

You . . . have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

We enter this conflict with the prestige of victory. We meet the enemy as a conquered foe. This is the high standpoint of faith. This is the only ground where the child of God should meet temptation. You have overcome them!

The elements and resources of our victory are unfolded with as much fullness as the resources of the foes.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8). The battle is not ours but God's. Christ is the leader in the conflict. From the beginning it has ever been so. When the battle first began in Eden it was the seed of the woman that was to bruise the head of the serpent. And, ever since, God has recognized the great conflict between good and evil as a personal issue between the Prince of Darkness and the Son of God. When He came to earth as the captain of our salvation, He met the adversary in single combat and overthrew him once for all. And now He still comes to lead us in triumph and overcome for us and in us. Let us enter every conflict with the confidence that the Lord is fighting for us, and that we are simply following His banner and fighting His battle.

There is our faith, which we may easily lose, and there is the faith of God, which holds and keeps us. This is one of the deepest secrets of the Christian life, that Christ within us becomes the power of an overwhelming faith. There is nothing more wonderful than that spirit of trust, which, through the darkness and the light, clings and fears not, but knows by an unspeakable instinct that He will not fail us, that He loves and leads and keeps, and will carry us through. Sometimes the thought comes to us, what if we should lose this trust; what if our confidence should fail? What if in some dark and dreadful hour we should be stricken with panic and sink in despair, and lose our confidence? This would be dark and terrible indeed! Perhaps we have come to such an hour. I once came to such an hour, and in the darkness of that dreadful moment, when Satan seemed to have destroyed by one fell blow, all my faith, I became afraid even to pray, and sinking in desolation I could only cry, "What shall I do? I cannot even trust!" It was then that for the first time I learned the faith of God. For, as I sank in the depths of my desolation and helplessness, there stole over my heart such a strange, new sweetness, such a sense of God's love, God's arms, God's overshadowing presence, and a trust that could not die, that I looked up and loved, and leaned, and rested with a simplicity at which I could only wonder and weep and say, "How blessed! How safe! How good God is! How wonderful His love, His trust, His presence!" And so, beloved, we must lose our faith to find His, and when we find it, we have something that Satan cannot steal, and that the world can neither give nor take away.

Therefore, these trials "have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine" (1 Peter 1:7). Therefore it was of Peter's faith that Jesus said: "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32). Therefore, we are exhorted in view of the devil's rage and hate, to stand "firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:9). Therefore, again, we have the admonition:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded....

"But my righteous one will live by faith.
And if he shrinks back,
I will not be pleased with him."

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. (Hebrews 10:35, 38-39)

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then whate'er may come,
We'll taste even here the hallowed bliss,
Of our eternal home.

(The Christ In the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Explain what it is in our lives that wins the victory over sin, Satan and the world?

1 John 1:7 Rev. 12:11

1 John 4:7-21

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)

It was peculiarly appropriate that it should be given to John, the beloved disciple, to unfold the Father's love. It was in keeping with the principle which he himself has announced in this chapter, that as it takes sin to know sin, so it requires love to understand love. "Whoever does not love does not know God." John was the disciple of love and therefore the revealer of love.

God is not justice. God is not wisdom. God is not power. God has all these attributes but none of them is great enough to constitute His essence. But love is His very nature and in love all other attributes find their completeness. Just as in the process of color printing all the cardinal colors when combined produce a perfect white; so when all the attributes of God meet they form the immaculate purity of divine love. Wisdom without love would be harsh. Justice without love would be severe. Power without love would be terrible. But love modifies, directs and softens every one of them, and blends them into the beautiful harmony of the divine character.

We should, therefore, always recognize the love of God as His supreme purpose in everything He does. He always loves, and He loves all as much as it is possible under the circumstances for them to receive. And when His love cannot avail, even then His heart is full of sorrow and compassion and He gives them at least the love of pity if not of approval. This is made very plain and very pathetic in our Savior's bitter tears over Jerusalem when they would not let Him save them; at least He would let them know that He loved them still. Perhaps it will be true in the last great day that the final remembrance which lost men will have of the Father's face and the Savior's heart will be a look of infinite tenderness, and perhaps once more a flood of tears.

We should look at everything that comes to us in the light of love, and believe that God means it for good. This may not appear at first. Again as in the process of color printing, the first impression may be crimson and the dark tints may follow, one upon the other, but when the last color has been put on, it will always result in the spotless white. So if God's providence has seemed so far to be strange and painful, wait a little longer. The process is not finished. Trust Him through every testing; and when His work is finished, you, too, like Jacob, will be compelled to say, "who has delivered me from all harm" (Genesis 48:16), or like Paul, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28).

So long as man is innocent, so long as the fact of sin does not intrude, nature reveals nothing but beneficence. But when we come up against the fact of disobedience to law and personal wrong on the part of the sinner, all this is changed. Nature has nothing but retribution and pain for the transgressor. It is just here that love comes in with its glorious triumph and finds a way by which even sin can be forgiven and sinners loved and saved by a holy God. The very scene where divine love most sublimely triumphs is the fall and the ruin of the human race, and the dark cloud of man's condemnation becomes the background on which Calvary and redemption have written in eternal luster, "God is Love." Just as the gulf stream flows northward through the cold Atlantic, warming its waves into tropical mildness until at last it embraces in its current the icebergs of the pole and melts them in its embrace; so God's love was poured through the dark waters of time and met man's guilt in the embrace of its mighty sacrifice and melted it away. And so John adds,

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. . . . And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (1 John 4:9, 10, 14)

(The Christ In the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Verses 12 and 13 speak tremendous volumes—about God, about His unspeakable love for me, and to think that He actually abides in me and is perfecting me through His Spirit—words just escape me to express the joy and heartfelt thanksgiving I feel to Him! And all He asks from me is to love Him and one another! Perhaps you are almost as speechless as I in these tremendous thoughts expressed in 1 John 4:7-21. **Were we created so God would have someone to love and we would become a people that would show His love?**

When we are made to love someone it is not really love, but when we love from a free response from our heart that is love. When God gave us a free will it was a deliberate act of self-limitation on His part in order to make genuine love of primary importance. **Use the Bible to prove or disprove the above statements.**

1 John 5:1-3

To the love of God he joins the keeping of the law, and justly so; for when we love God as our Father and Lord, reverence must necessarily be connected with love. Besides, God cannot be separated from himself. As, then, he is the fountain of all righteousness and equity, he who loves him must necessarily have his heart prepared to render obedience to righteousness. The love of God, then, is not idle or inactive. ("The love of God," here clearly means love to God: it is the love which God is the object.)

But from this passage we also learn what is the keeping of the law. For if, when constrained only by fear, we obey God by keeping his commandments, we are very far off from true obedience. Then, the first thing is, that our hearts should be devoted to God in willing reverence, and then, that our life should be formed according to the rule of the law. This is what Moses meant when, in giving a summary of the law, he said, "O Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to love him and to obey him?" (Deut. 10:12)

(Calvins Commentaries, John Calvin)

Why is it necessary for us to have a heart that renders obedience to righteousness before we can have continuing fellowship with God?

Rom. 1:16-18

1 John 5:4-5

This passage is remarkable: for though Satan continually repeats his dreadful and horrible onsets, yet the Spirit of God, declaring that we are beyond the reach of danger, removes fear, and animates us to fight with courage. And the past time is more emphatical than the present or the future; for he says, *that has overcome*, in order that we might feel certain, as though the enemy had been already put to flight. It is, indeed, true, that our warfare continues through life, that our conflicts are daily, nay, that new and various battles are every moment on every side stirred up against us by the enemy; but as God does not arm us only for one day, and as faith is not that of one day, but is the perpetual work of the Holy Spirit, we are already partakers of victory, as though we had already conquered.

This confidence does not, however, introduce indifference, but renders us always anxiously intent on fighting. For the Lord thus bids his people to be certain, while yet he would not have them to be secure; but on the contrary, he declares that they have already overcome, in order that they may fight more courageously and more strenuously.

The term *world* has here a wide meaning, for it includes whatever is adverse to the Spirit of God: thus, the corruption of our nature is a part of the world; all lusts, all the crafts of Satan, in short, whatever leads us away from God. Having such a force to contend with, we have an immense war to carry on, and we should have been already conquered before coming to the contest, and we should be conquered a hundred times daily, had not God promised to us the victory. But God encourages us to fight by promising us the victory. But as this promise secures to us perpetually the invincible power of God, so, on the other hand, it annihilates all the strength of men. For the Apostle does not teach us here that God only brings some help to us, so that being aided by him, we may be sufficiently able to resist; but he makes victory to depend on faith alone; and faith receives from another that by which it overcomes. They then take away from God what is his own, who sing triumph to their own power.

We conquer by faith, because we derive strength from Christ; as Paul also says, "I can do all things through him that strengthened me," (Phil. 4:13). He only then can conquer Satan and the world, and not succumb to his own flesh, who, diffident as to himself, relies on Christ's power alone. For by *faith* he means a real apprehension of Christ, or an effectual laying hold on him, by which we apply his power to ourselves.

(Calvins Commentaries, John Calvin)

What does the term "world" mean in this passage of scripture?

Find a verse or verses stating we have overcome the world.

What do we most depend on for victory over the world?

1 John 5:6-8

This is he that came. That our faith may rest safely on Christ, he says the real substance of the shadows of the law appears in him. For I doubt not but that he alludes by the words *water and blood* to the ancient rites of the law. The comparison, moreover, is intended for this end, not only that we may know that the Law of Moses was abolished by the coming of Christ, but that we may seek in him the fulfillment of those things which the ceremonies formerly typified (foreshadowed). And though they were of various kinds, yet under these two the Apostle denotes the whole perfection of holiness and righteousness, for by water was all filth washed away, so that men might come before God pure and clean, and by blood was expiation made, and a pledge given of a full reconciliation with God; but the law only adumbrated by external symbols what was to be really and fully performed by the Messiah.

John then fitly proves that Jesus is the Christ of the Lord formerly promised, because he brought with him that by which he sanctifies us wholly.

And, indeed, as to the blood by which Christ reconciled God, there is no doubt, but how he came by water may be questioned. But that the reference is to baptism is not probable. I certainly think that John sets forth here the fruit and effect of what he recorded in the Gospel history; for what he says there, that water and blood flowed from the side of Christ, is no doubt to be deemed a miracle. I know that such a thing does happen naturally to the dead; but it happened through God's purpose, that Christ's side became the fountain of blood and water, in order that the faithful may know that cleansing (of which the ancient baptisms were types) is found in him, and that they might know what all the sprinklings of blood formerly presignified was fulfilled.

And it is the Spirit that beareth witness. He shows in this clause how the faithful know and feel the power of Christ, even because the Spirit renders them certain; and their faith might not vacillate, he adds, that a full and real firmness or stability is produced by the testimony of the Spirit. And he calls the Spirit *truth*, because his authority is indubitable, and ought to be abundantly sufficient for us.

There are three. He applies what had been said of water and blood to his own purpose, in order that they who reject Christ might have no excuse; for by testimonies abundantly strong and clear, he proves that it is he who had been formerly promised, inasmuch as water and blood, being the pledges and the effects of salvation, really testify that he had been sent by God. He adds a third witness, the Holy Spirit, who yet holds the first place, for without him the water and blood would have flowed without any benefit; for it is he who seals on our hearts the testimony of the water and blood; it is he who by his power makes the fruit of Christ's death to come to us; yea, he makes the blood shed for our redemption to penetrate into our hearts, or, to say all in one word, he makes Christ with all his blessings to become ours. So Paul, in Rom. 1:4, after having said that Christ by his resurrection manifested himself to be the Son of God, immediately adds, "Through the sanctification of Spirit." For whatever signs of divine glory may shine forth in Christ, they would yet be obscure to us and escape our vision, were not the Holy Spirit to open for us the eyes of faith.

Readers may now understand why John adduced the Spirit a witness together with the water and the blood, even because it is the peculiar office of the Spirit, to cleanse our consciences by the blood of Christ, to cause the cleansing effected by it to be efficacious. On this subject some remarks are made at the beginning of the Second Epistle of Peter, where he uses nearly the same mode of speaking, that that the Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts by the sprinkling the blood of Christ.

But from these words we may learn, that faith does not lay hold on a bare or an empty Christ, but that his power is at the same time vivifying. For to what purpose has Christ been sent on the earth, except to reconcile God by the sacrifice of his death? except the office of washing had been allotted to him by the Father?

It may however be objected, that the distinction here mentioned is superfluous, because Christ cleansed us by expiating our sins; then the Apostle mentions the same thing twice. I indeed allow that cleansing is included in expiation; therefore I made no difference between the water and the blood, as though they were distinct; but if any one of us considers his own infirmity, he will readily acknowledge that it is not in vain or without reason that blood is distinguished from the water. Besides, the Apostle, as it has been stated, alludes to the rites of the law; and God, on account of human infirmity, had formerly appointed, not only sacrifices, but also washings. And the Apostle meant distinctly to show that the reality of both has been exhibited in Christ, and on this account he had said before, "Not by water only," for he means, that not only some part of our salvation is found in Christ, but the whole of it, so that nothing is to be sought elsewhere.

(Calvin's Commentaries, John Calvin)

We need not only the water of repentance, but also the blood of propitiation. When these two are admitted, the Holy Spirit will bear his secret witness to the soul. (F. B. Meyer) **What is the meaning of the water and the blood in this passage and what role does the Spirit play?**

Does Calvin's explanation of the water, blood and Spirit shed light on John 3:19-21 and if so explain?

1 John 5:9-13

But the Apostle, that he might keep us altogether in Christ, again repeats that life is found in him; as though he had said, that no other way of obtaining life has been appointed for us by God the Father. And the Apostle, indeed, briefly includes here three things: that we are all given up to death until God in his gratuitous favor restores us to life; for he plainly declares that life is a gift from God: and hence also it follows that we are destitute of it, and that it cannot be acquired by merits; secondly, he teaches us that this life is conferred on us by the gospel, because there the goodness and the paternal love of God is made known to us; lastly, he says that we cannot otherwise become partakers of this life than by believing in Christ.

He that hath not the Son. This is a confirmation of the last sentence. It ought, indeed, to have been sufficient, that God made life to be in none but in Christ, that it might be sought in him; but lest any one should turn away to another, he excludes all from the hope of life who seek it not in Christ. We know what it is to have Christ, for he is possessed by faith. He then shows that all who are separated from the body of Christ are without life.

But this seems inconsistent with reason; for history shows that there have been great men, endued with heroic virtues, who yet were wholly unacquainted with Christ; and it seems unreasonable that men of so great eminence had no honor. To this I answer, that we are greatly mistaken if we think that whatever is eminent in our eyes is approved by God; for, as it is said in Luke 16:15, "What is highly esteemed by men is an abomination with God." For as the filthiness of the heart is hid from us, we are satisfied with the external appearance; but God sees that under this is concealed the foulest filth. It is, therefore, no wonder if specious virtues, flowing from an impure heart, and tending to no right end, have an ill odor to him. Besides, from where comes purity, from where a genuine regard for religion, except from the Spirit of Christ? There is, then, nothing worthy of praise except in Christ.

There is, further, another reason which removes every doubt; for the righteousness of men is in the remission of sins. If you take away this, the sure curse of God and eternal death awaits all. Christ alone is he who reconciles the Father to us, as he has once for all pacified him by the sacrifice of the cross. It hence follows, that God is propitious to none but in Christ, nor is there righteousness but in him.

(Calvins Commentaries, John Calvin)

Here is terror for the wicked. Those who defy Him, break His laws, have no concern for His glory, but live their lives as though He did not exist, must not suppose that, when at the last they shall cry to Him for mercy, He will alter His will, revoke His word, and rescind His awful threatenings. No, He has declared, "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezekiel 8:18). God will not deny Himself to gratify their lusts. God is holy, unchangingly so. Therefore God hates sin, eternally hates it. Hence the eternity of the punishment of all who die in their sins.

(The Nature of God, A. W. Pink)

Eternal life is nothing other than *the life of God Himself*. We are promised that here and now there can be given us a share in the very life of God.

In God there is *peace* and, therefore, *eternal life* means *serenity*. It means a life liberated from the fears which haunt the human situation. In God there is *power*, and therefore, *eternal life* means *the defeat of frustration*. It means a life filled with the power of God, and, therefore, victorious over circumstances. In God there is *holiness* and, therefore, *eternal life* means the *defeat of sin*. It means a life clad with the purity of God and armed against the soiling infections of the world. In God there is *love* and, therefore, *eternal life* means *the end of bitterness and hatred*. It means a life which has the love of God in its heart and the undefeatable love of man in all its feelings and in all its action. In God there is *life* and, therefore *eternal life* means *the defeat of death*. It means a life which is indestructible because it has in it the indestructibility of God Himself.

It is John's conviction that such a life comes through Jesus Christ and in no other way. If eternal life is the life of God, it means that we can possess His life only when we know God and are enabled to approach Him and rest in Him. We can do these two things only in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ alone can bring us to God. It is in Him that there is open to us the new and living way into the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-23).

(*The Letters of John and Jude*, William Barclay)

How do you know you have eternal life?

1 John 5:14-15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God. (1 John 5:14)

The universe is held together by the one great law of gravitation. Society is held together by the one great law of confidence—in the family, the commercial world and the larger circle of tribes and nations. The spiritual world is held together by the law of faith which binds man to God, and adjusts him to his fellow man, even as the law of gravitation binds the solar system and the larger universe.

The Apostle John, whose great heart and divine intuition reached to the essential principles of things rather than mere outward forms, having unfolded already the great principles of life and love in this epistle, now leads us to the law of faith and the principle of confidence, which underlies all spiritual life and experience. Again and again we find in this epistle the expression "we know," and in the closing chapter it rises to the highest and most comprehensive range of spiritual truth and experience.

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13). No truth has become more pronounced and more practical and powerful for good in the Christian teaching of our day than this: that it is the privilege of every child of God to possess not only a hope of heaven, but a full assurance of his acceptance in Christ. Two blessed facts enter into this assurance. First, we have eternal life, and second, we *know* we have it. Nothing less than this can satisfy an earnest soul. The more valuable an object is, the more necessary it is that our title to it should be sure. You are willing to purchase a bill of goods for 50 cents without a title of deed, but you would not purchase a house and lot at 10,000 dollars without a title guarantee. The foundation of this assurance is very clearly stated in this passage. It is not our personal consciousness, our happy feelings, our new experience or our better life; but it is a record that God has given and that God requires us to believe.

Having settled the question of our salvation by faith we now go on to apply the same principle of faith to our whole Christian life, and we receive the answers to our prayers by the very same principle which enables us to take the first step. Indeed, a right faith at the start will be of infinite help to us all the way through, and a halting confidence for our salvation will make us halting Christians to the end of the chapter. The first thing required of us when we pray is that we

ask according to His will. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). We should spend more time in determining what to pray for than in pleading for it afterwards. His will is revealed in His Word, and every promised blessing within the covers of the Bible is a proper thing to ask and believe for. His will is very large and generous and covers all our needs of spirit, soul and body.

Then, having asked according to His will, we are next to believe that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. This is according to the command of our Lord during His earthly ministry. "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24). We may not have the actual thing for which we have prayed in tangible and visible possession, but we have the petition. His consent has been given. The request has been honored. The decree has been passed. The blessing is on the way and the delivery will come in God's due time. We can afford to wait. We can afford to suffer. We can afford to be tested. We have His Word and we count the things that are not as though they were. This gives to prayer a definiteness and a force which are most satisfying. Without this our prayers are mere ventures, like the soap bubbles which a child may blow into air and they float away and disappear, and he never expects to see more than one in a score again. True prayer, like the echo, should come back to us, first in the shout of praise and then in the glad song of deliverance. This is the prayer that can help others and can call into action all the forces of omnipotence for the work of Christ and the salvation of men. This was the way Christ prayed. "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me" (John 11:41-42). And this is the way that Christ has bidden us to pray, for He has said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (15:7).

"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him" (1 John 5:18). Most of our spiritual failures arise from discouragement. We go out expecting to fail, and of course we fail. If we would but know that there is One within who is mightier than our weakness and stronger than all the strength of our foes, and that He is keeping us and will keep us, we should not fear and would not fall. It is confidence that keeps the soul.

This confidence, however, must be founded upon a right understanding of God's way of sanctification. First we must learn to distinguish between our new self and our old self. We must count the old life as wholly renounced and refuse any more to fear or obey it. We must recognize ourselves as having a new life, born of God. We are as free from sin as the rose is free from the soil or the sand that touches it, but cannot defile it; as the seafowl is free from the defiling stain of the miry waters in which it plunges; as the Son of God was free from the pollution of the world through which He passed with His immaculate holiness. Then we must learn that sin consists not in the temptation of the evil one or in the various moods and feelings which he may throw over our minds and hearts, but in the deliberate attitude of our will. The evil thoughts which Satan hurls upon us like fiery darts, are not our sins but his, unless we accept them and endorse them. We can throw them off as the rose washes off the dust of highway, as the seafowl sheds the brine from its burnished wing, as the ship throws off the waves that threaten to submerge it. We can say to the tempter that these thoughts are yours, not mine. I refuse them. I am not defiled. I will not sin and I will not fear. God accepts our will as our real action and counts us victorious according to the fixed purpose of our hearts. Then we must also understand that sanctification is not our holiness, our self-perfection, our goodness, but, as so well expressed here, the keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him we stand, in Him we overcome, in Him we are perfect. So He that was born of God keeps us and that wicked one cannot touch us. To know this is to be armed with omnipotence and clothed with victory. Beloved, is this the confidence that you have in Him?

(The Christ In the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

We know we have eternal life. The rope is in our hand bearing us onward, but its ends are hidden from view in the past and in the future, We also know that God hears us when we comply with the conditions of true prayer. We know, moreover, that we can become the medium through which the life of God passes to others. Thus the humblest child may have power with God and men. (F. B. Meyer) **How do you remedy the situation if you do not "know" you have eternal life?**

If true prayer is asking God for what He wants, should we be listening to God more than talking to Him?

Here is encouragement to prayer. "What comfort would it be to pray to a god that, like the chameleon, changed color every moment? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day, and deny it another?" (S. Charnock, 1670). Should someone ask what is the use of praying to One whose will is already fixed, we answer, because He requires it. What blessings has God promised without our seeking them? "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14). He has willed everything that is for His child's good. To ask for anything contrary to His will is not prayer, but rank rebellion.

(The Nature of God, A. W. Pink)

1 John 5:16-17

Regarding verses 16 and 17, Barclay's definition of the essence of sin is: So long as a man in his heart of hearts hates sin and hates himself for sinning, so long as he *knows* that he is sinning, he is never beyond repentance and, therefore, never beyond forgiveness; but once he begins to revel in sin and to make it the deliberate policy of his life, he is on the way to death, for he is on the way to a state where the idea of repentance will not, and cannot, enter his head. The mortal sin is the state of the man who has listened to sin and refused to listen to God so often, that he loves his sin and regards it as the most profitable thing in the world.

(The Letters of John and Jude, William Barclay)

Explain the words, "there is a sin unto death".

1 John 5:18-19

The picture which John has given us of divine life and love, has been so full of brightness that we have scarcely seen the shadows. The testimony with which he began his letter, that "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1:5), has given the keynote to the whole epistle. Yet back of the light and the love, there ever follows the shadow of evil. The very brightness of the light makes the shadow deeper and darker; and our study of His blessed message would not be complete unless we looked for a time at the shadow side, and then at the light which illumines it and is able to turn "blackness into dawn" (Amos 5:8). Or, to change the figure, back of all the notes of victory which ring through this epistle, there is the noise of battle and the form of the conflict and the foe. Just as surely as the apostle sees the vision of his Almighty and all-victorious Lord, does he also behold the dark form of the wicked one and the legions of his hostile forces—our spiritual foes.

The devil is himself described as "the evil one." "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:18-19). Certainly John had no skepticism about the existence and power of the devil, and no one who knows God will ever doubt the reality of Satan. It is the men who have never had their eyes opened to behold the Father, who are still blind to the reality of the wicked one. The light reveals the shadow. Infernal wickedness always follows supernatural power and love. The period of Christ's earthly ministry was coincident with the outbreak of satanic evil, and the revelation of God in a human life always brings the experience of deep and fiery temptations. It is in the heavenly places that the spirits of wickedness fight their most desperate battles against the saints of God.

John's language here points out the devil in the most emphatic manner as the very personification of all that is evil. "The evil one" indicates a personality about whose identity there can be no mistake. There he stands, patent to all eyes—the embodiment of evil, the one who has no double, the prince of darkness, preeminence above all other things as the paragon of wickedness and the enemy of God and man. This world is still his throne, and the most helpless of his subjects and victims are those who least understand their master and are so deceived that they even doubt his existence. He has blindfolded them with delusion, and bound them with the silken fetters of self-confidence and deceit; and as the Word of God describes it, he "has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

How could we open the door for the wicked one to touch us?

1 John 5:20

Our confidence is not merely in His Word, His answers to our prayers, His help in our conflicts, but in His own character and love as He has revealed Himself to us and taught us as the sum of all knowledge to know Him. And so the sublimest height of this whole epistle is reached at last. "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (5:20). Higher than all blessings received, deeper than all truth revealed, back of all that He has said and all that He has done, is what He is Himself and what He is to us. But, before all this can become a fact and an experience, there must come to us a divine revelation and a divine understanding. And so the apostle tells us that He "has given us understanding, so that we may know him" (5:20). This is something the natural heart cannot know itself. This is something that genius and learning cannot find. This is something that eloquence cannot make plain. This is something that must come to us through the direct vision of the Holy Spirit, giving us a new conception, a divine intuition, a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our very hearts.

Therefore, it comes to pass that many of the most gifted minds of earth are dark and blind with respect to the knowledge of God. To them He is but a name, a possible force, a remote and unreal fact. By all their searching they cannot find out God. Talk to them about the delights of His presence and it is all to them as an unmeaning sound. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—but God has

revealed it to us by his Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). There is nothing more sad than the helplessness of the human heart to reach the conception of God and to realize the presence of Christ. It is one of the most precious gifts of divine love. It is as new a sense in the soul as the instinct of a bird. And so on the other hand, there are souls that are illiterate and unrefined, but their whole being is alive with the spiritual sense. Christ is more real to them than any material thing. His presence is a fountain of perpetual joy. They live in a world of ever changing, ever fresh delight and their happy heart is a heaven below. God has given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true, and they are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then there comes with this the deep delightful assurance that the soul has found at last the true, the real, the eternal. Everything else has disappointed us. Everything else has failed us. Everything else has proved transitory or false. But this is true. This satisfies the heart. This meets every intuition and longing of our nature. This fills the fullness of our being, and the transported heart sinks into infinite rest and sings with holy gladness,

Here rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.

Somehow we know that this will never fail us, this will never change, this will never pass away. This will grow deeper, sweeter, stronger, through all time and all eternity. This is truth. This is God. This is everlasting rest. Oh, the satisfaction that it brings to the poor tempest-tossed heart after it has been buffeted by the billow of skepticism, by the storms of doubt, by the assaults of Satan and sin, by the disappointments of life, by the sorrows, sickness and heartbreaks of this vale of tears. It has got home at last and it understands the sublime strains of the ancient song that first echoed on the plains of Paran, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" (Psalm 90:1). Beloved, have you found Him that is true? Have you come to know Him? Have you received the revelation of His face, of His presence, of His love? Have you entered into His rest?

Perhaps as you read these lines your heart is chilled with a sense of loneliness and disappointment. Perhaps the very joy these words describe only makes you the more conscious of your strangeness to it all. Perhaps the very happiness of the hearts around you only depresses you with a deeper discouragement because it is all a blank to you. Listen! He is waiting to make this vision real to your heart. He is ready to give you this revelation of Himself. You have tried to think it out. Your religion has been too much in your head, your hands, your feet, what you are pleased to call your practical nature. There is something else in the human soul that needs to be educated and fed. It is the heart. It is the spiritual sense. It is that which feels and knows and loves. It was made for God, and God alone can awaken it and satisfy it. Ask Him to do so. Fall at His feet in helplessness, and yet in confidence say to Him, "Now show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). Upon you will open the vision of God, and to you will come the joyful testimony:

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.

Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love so pure and changeless,
Satisfies my heart.

Ever lift Thy face upon me,
As I live and work for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Thy grace.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

"We know" satisfies the heart and meets every longing of our nature. **Being acquainted with God is one thing but talk more about what it means to know God.**

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:20). What is communicated to the saint when he is born again is wholly spiritual and exactly suited for taking in

the scriptural knowledge of Christ. It is not an entirely new faculty which is then imparted, but rather the renewing of the original one, fitting it for the apprehension of new objects. It consists of an internal illumination, a divine light that shines in our hearts, enabling us to discern the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Though we are not now admitted into a corporeal sight of Christ, yet He is made a living reality to those who have been quickened into newness of life. By this divine renewing of the understanding we can now perceive the peerless excellency and perfect suitability of Christ. The knowledge we have of Him is seated in the understanding. That fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises the mind into being fixed upon Him. Such a spiritual understanding is not attained by any efforts of ours, but is a supernatural bestowment, a divine gift conferred upon the elect, which admits them into the secrets of the Most High.

(The Nature of God, A. W. Pink)

1 John 5:21

John then closes by warning us as Christians to guard ourselves from idols, and although idols in his day were mainly man-made, we face “idols” of all kinds today in every realm of life. However, as we meditate on this heartfelt teaching of the Apostle John, the beloved disciple, who was the closest to His Master, we are able to “listen to” and “obey” the very heart of our Savior and Lord, Christ Jesus—and His loving and compassionate Being fills every vacuum within our lives. May we grow ever closer to Him in obedience and faithfulness until the dawning of that “everlasting morning!”