

**FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: THE BASIS FOR FULL AND LASTING JOY**

A Study in First John

by

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## **FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: THE BASIS FOR FULL AND LASTING JOY**

### **Surveying The Territory**

#### **[1] Outline Covering The First Three Chapters**

##### Introduction:

- (1) Centrality of Jesus Christ - He is the Eternal Life of John's personal experience.(vs. 1,2)
- (2) John's desire to have us share this experience. vs. 3
- (3) John's purpose: A message of Good News that your joy might be full. 1:4

#### **I. CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR ENJOYING THIS FELLOWSHIP IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. ( I John 1:5 - 2:2)**

- A. Walking in the Light. (vs. 7); upon stepping into the Light, we enjoy:
- B. Total forgiveness and cleansing by the blood. (vs. 7,9) ; this includes:
- C. Provision for the inevitability of further sinning. (I John 2:1,2)

#### **II. OUTWARD EVIDENCES OF GENUINE, CONTINUING FELLOWSHIP. (I John 2:3-28)**

- A. The Test of obedience to His Word. (I John 2: 3-6)
- B. The Test of love for the brethren ( I John 2: 7-11)
- C. The Test of separation from the world. ( I John 2: 12 - 17)
- D. The Test of an accurate understanding regarding the person of Jesus Christ. (I John 2: 18 - 27)

#### **III. THE CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AFFIRMED BY THE EVIDENCES RESULTING FROM A VITAL, INTERNAL, ORGANIC PARTICIPATION IN THE VERY LIFE OF A HOLY GOD. (I John 2:28 - 3:24)**

- A. The practice of righteousness evidences a birth from above. (2:29)
- B. In the amazement of being a "born one" of God, John affirms that such a person makes it his AIM to purify himself in becoming like Him. (3: 1-3)
- C. Conscious realization of our possession of the very life of a Holy God results in dealing honestly and intelligently with sin. ( 3: 4-9)
- D. Recognizing this relationship helps us realize that John is talking about *habit* and *character* and not individual acts of sin. (3: 8-10)
- E. Through a complete exchange of natures, true believers love the brethren. (3: 10-18)

#### **IV. EXHORTATIONS TOWARD FULFILLMENT OF LASTING JOY. Ch. 4:1-5:12**

Conclusions - 5:13 to the end

#### **[2] Historical Background of this Epistle to aid in our understanding.**

- a. The heresy of Gnosticism had begun to make inroads among the Churches in John's day. The Gnostics taught: (*as does Christian Science of our day*)
  - (1) All matter is evil, only Spirit is good.
  - (2) Jesus could not have come in the flesh; flesh is evil!

- (3) Sin is an *illusion* !
- (4) The nonliteral sense of Scripture is correct and can be understood by only a select few.
- (5) Evil in the world precludes God's being the only creator.

**[3] The *scope and character* of this Epistle.**

- a. This book is the address of a Pastor to his flock. It is a specimen of Apostolic preaching to his flock. (*He was Pastor at Ephesus in his older age*)
- b. John addresses himself to "those who believe on the name of the Son of God," in order that:
  - "your joy may be full" (1:4)
  - "they may know that they have Eternal Life" (5:13)
  - He might guard them from seductive error. (2: 26; 4:1-6)
- c. His purpose is to reassure the Christian flock in a troubled time, and to perfect the life of faith within the Church.

**[4] The *major problem*** in dealing with this Epistle is that there are two differing views as to John's purpose in writing:

- a. One view understands this book to be about the *TESTS OF LIFE* - checking out the validity of their salvation experience. They see John's purpose in writing to be to encourage his readers, who were understood to be believers, to assure themselves of their salvation by verifying the validity of their profession through a series of tests of their spiritual life. This is the *older* of the two views and commands the majority of scholarly support.
- b. The *alternate* view is that this book is about the *TESTS OF FELLOWSHIP*. According to this view, 1 John was written to encourage believers to maintain fellowship (communion) with God and to provide assurance of that communion through a series of tests concerning the manner in which this communion is maintained.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: THE BASIS FOR FULL AND LASTING JOY Chapter One

### THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST AS ETERNAL LIFE

(Introduction To The Epistle 1:1-4)

Introduction:

- (1) There are two key verses to this Epistle. In them John expresses his purpose in writing. In 1 John 5: 13 he expresses his concern that we be sure that Eternal life is ours. In 1 John 1: 4, after sharing his own excitement about the reality of Eternal life because of first-hand experience, he wants us, too, to share in that experience because that, in fact, is **the secret of full and lasting Joy: THE CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND THE CONSCIOUS POSSESSION OF THE LIFE OF GOD WITHIN US IS THE BASIS FOR THIS JOY.**
- 2) John follows the same pattern as he does in his "Gospel" where there, too, he introduces his subject at the beginning of the book and gives us a key near the end of the book. ( 20:31) He wrote his Gospel so that we could *have Life*, and his Epistle so that we could *know that we have Life* !

#### I. AN ANALYSIS OF THE "BEGINNINGS" IN VS. 1

A. "That which was *from* the beginning" - which "beginning" ?

1. "*In* the beginning was the Word"-John 1:1. This refers to Eternity - be-fore sin and death and darkness had come into the world - before the world itself existed ( it existed *only* in the *purposes* of God as revealed in Prov. 8: 22,23 - "The Lord possessed me *in the beginning of his way*- before his works of old - i.e. in Eternity.)Read following verses in Ch. 8
2. See Prov. 8: 27 ff. - note vs. 30 "Then I was with him" - this is the be-ginning of Gen. 1:1 - of creation !
3. 1 John 1:1 - That which was *from* the beginning - the time of the manifestation of "that Eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us". This was what John was so excited about !

#### II. JOHN'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS AN EYEWITNESS. VS. 1

A. What John was able to see first-hand was the *life* and *nature* of *that* Eternal Life that had been displayed in the very person of the Lord Jesus, and that was *with the Father* (vs. 2) in Eternity past - what he believed to be *the supreme manifestation of God* ! Since John is going to say that he wants all of us to be sure of sharing it with him, he goes out of his way to tell us how *thoroughly* he had checked it out- it demanded the strongest evidence !

1. "That which we have *heard*. This "hearing" concerning the Word of Life is not to be limited to the actual preaching and ministry of our Lord during his visible presence. It embraces the whole divine preparation for His advent during the whole OT economy. (Heb. 1:1)

2. "That which we have seen with our eyes" - "looked upon" (*literally -gazed upon - stared*) and "hands have handled" : this is the intensity of investigation to which he could testify.
3. John repeats, "having seen" etc., to warn readers against false doctrine.

### III. JOHN'S PURPOSE IN MAKING HIS DECLARATION 1: 3-4)

#### A. Look at the *fact* of his declaration.

1. *What* he is declaring is essentially the good news of the Gospel. He was excited, having had visibly opened before him, Eternal Life made visible *in a person, Jesus Christ* ! Here is a man who had something to say !
2. The *importance* of this fact is that all of the ills of mankind (in John's day as well as ours) find their solution in this "Life" that John has witnessed and thoroughly investigated. Therefore, it can be *declared* without equivocation ! There are no two sides to the fact of its importance.

#### B. Now look at *why* he made this declaration: that you and I might have the same fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ as he and the other Apostles had - and - the lasting fullness of Joy that accompanies it !!

[ *We've come to the place now where we must discuss the meaning of the word, "fellowship": does this that brings fullness of joy refer to the maintenance of "communion" (as our alternate view in "**major problem**" [pg. 3] suggests)? or does it, in fact, refer to a joint-participation in God's very Life - Eternal Life ?**The answer will determine the whole course of our study when we consider the "conditions" for a fullness of Joy that all of us desire***]

1. Meaning of the word "fellowship" as used in the NT  
It "describes the living bond in which the Christian stands---to *be a Christian* is to have fellowship with God. This fellowship is with the Father and the Son" (1st John 1: 3, 6) ---[*Kitten's Dictionary Of The NT Vol. 3, page 808.*] - (See also I Cor. 1: 9)
2. Further support substantiating this same use of the word "fellowship".
  - a. "Fellowship (*Koinwnia*) is the spiritual union of the believer with Christ ---as described in the figures of the vine and the branches---and the body & the head [I Cor. 12:12: Col. 1:18] as well as communion with the Father and fellow-believers"---(NIV Study Bible note: I John 1:3)
  - b. "*Koivwnia* (fellowship) should be understood soteriologically (*part of the salvation process*) so that "to be in fellowship" is equivalent to having eternal life, or being saved"---Dr. J. Allen Blair
  - c. "Fellowship means participating and having partnership in the common possession of Eternal Life, not communion or relationships as one would expect in a family" - F.F.Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, pg. 28; Darby, *Notes on the Epistles of John*, Pg. 13,14; Plummer, *The Epistles Of St. John*, pg. 120; Westcott, *The Epistles of John*, pg. 298

- d. Robert Law ( in "*Tests Of Life*" -Page 173) analyzes John's meaning when equating Christ's ministry as *advocate* with that of His ministry of intercession in Hebrews, (though he does not make any reference to the word *covenant* as used in Hebrews) as: "With him (John) "covenant relationship" becomes *koinwnia* (1:3), filial fellowship with God, the mutual indwelling of God and his people. And unmistakably this is the standpoint from which he approaches the problem of sin and its removal"
3. The bottom-line basis for these views (*in my own opinion*) is the double purpose statements in the Epistle itself: I John 5:13 and I John 1:4. These texts reveal John's purpose as writing "these things" that his readers might "know that they have Eternal Life" (*and this is a matter of relationship!*) and that in "knowing" this their " joy might be full



## CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR ENJOYING THIS FELLOWSHIP IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. ( 1:5 - 2:2)

### Chapter Two

#### **Introduction:**

- (1) We have tried to show (*if our interpretation is correct?*) in chapter one that the realization of 'fellowship' is presented by the Apostle as evidence by means of which a *believer may know that he has Eternal Life*; - they go together !
- (2) We believe, also, that John used the terms, "eternal life", "fellowship", "to know God" synonymously as a description for "Christian". e.g. John 17: 3, "*And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent*" - ( I Cor. 1:9) - "*called into the fellowship of his Son*"
- (3) John *proclaims* a message concerning the one with whom we desire to have fellowship, God! ( Chapt. 1:5)
  - [a] He is light, without a trace of darkness. This is God's absolute holiness of character.( see I Timothy 6:16 - "*Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto*"
  - [b] "Light is used throughout Scripture as a synonym for infinite holiness, purity and perfect righteousness" (*An Outline And Analysis Of The First Epistle Of John - page 38*, by Raymond Gingrich).
  - [c] The phrase, "no darkness at all" is emphatic and is an emphasis that would be natural for John to use seeing that in his times, most of his readers having been raised in heathenism, their gods "were stained, in the belief of their worshipers, with foul human vices, gods so evil in some of their practices that St. Paul justly said concerning them: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. They had gods that could cheat and lie, gods licentious and unchaste, gods spiteful and malignant toward men, quarrelsome and abusive towards each other." (*ibid.*)
  - [d] This is why John would say (as the original Greek would put it: "*Darkness there is not in him, no, not in any way.*"
- (4) Thus, with this "message" as a preface, we will learn the conditions for fellowship (*joint-participation*) with a "holy" God - whose Life is literally *unveiled* before us in the person of Jesus Christ who is the very Life (eternal) that John saw, touched and handled according to 1:1ff. It is that life in which we participate when we trust Him as Savior and Lord , i.e. when we are saved!

### **I. WALKING IN THE LIGHT, A CONDITION FOR FELLOWSHIP (1 John 1: 7)**

#### **A. Meaning of "light" and "darkness" in the New Testament.**

1. John 8:12 "**I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in**



*darkness, but shall have the light of Life.*" ("To 'follow' Christ is to commit ourselves to Him unreservedly as our only Savior and Lord in doctrine and conduct.") [Arthur S. Pink - *Gospel of John.*]

2. John 1:4 "In Him was Life (*eternal*); and the Life was the **light** of men". Light in the Gospel of John is NEVER defined as "righteousness" or "goodness". It is defined as "Life". It is the revelation of "Eternal Life" - and to walk in the light is to accept that revelation.
  3. Thus, light is immediately connected with eternal life! This light is the **full revelation of God!** This is the light (*life*) that John saw as it was manifested. (I John 1: 2) It is His "Life" through which God has thoroughly revealed Himself! (Comp. John 14:6-9) The full revelation given by God in Jesus Christ is *Christianity*; the *truth* as now unfolded by the Scriptures! This is why John will say (in 2:8), "the *true* light now shineth".
  4. Before God had made himself fully known He dwelt in thick darkness. **The whole world of unbelievers lives in that darkness.** Anything obscuring the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:4 ) is of the darkness - of Satan, himself. An unconverted man, one whose sins are not taken away, who is not brought to God, is **in the darkness of his natural state, and in ignorance of God;** and he is in this position entirely outside of the question of what his conduct may be.
    - a. Thus to reject that **full** revelation (John 3:19-21) is to prefer the "death" associated with the old creation - to prefer to live as they did before that revelation came.( Ephes. 2:1 - "dead" in trespasses and sins!) - leaving them **in darkness !**
- B. What does it mean to "walk" in the light, or darkness ?
1. In the light of "A" (above), children of God are in the light. Those who walk in the light are the children of God! He may not walk *according* to the light, but he is *in* the light. There is no other place before God which a believer can occupy in relation to light and darkness save light - there is not even *twilight*, he is either in the light or in the dark !
    - a. It is clear from Chapt. 1:5 (comp 2:25) that John's "message" was about "Eternal Life" - a life embodied in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His purity and holiness. And this was the "light" of the revelation of this NT message.
      - (1) The root of the word, "message" is "promise"; so that what John was clarifying was the "promise" of Eternal Life. (2:25)
      - (2) Those who received it by faith were those walking **in the light** of that message.
    - b. I John 3:14,15 validate further that "life" and "death" (saved and lost) are John's meaning. The hater of the brother "abides in death" and **does not have Eternal Life !**
  2. Col. 1:13 - "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
  3. Please look up the following verses and then ask yourself the question whether they refer to being "in" or "out" of fellowship (*communion*) or whether they refer to

being saved or lost. (Acts 26: 17,18; Ephes. 5:8; I Thess. 5: 4-9; Col. 1: 12,13; I Peter 2:9; 2 Cor. 6: 14-16)

*[As We Therefore Step Into The Light, We Enjoy:]*

## II. TOTAL FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING BY THE BLOOD ( 1: 7-9)

- A. The question now is: standing in the light (*as we do*), we, being such as we are - we, whose life and character, when brought under the scrutiny of God's blazing holiness - how can we have immediate fellowship with Him in whose light we stand revealed (unmasked) in all of our deformity and guilt ?

**[The very first requirement for fellowship is holiness - walking in the full blaze of His Holiness, revealing our every flaw, we have fellowship - fellowship follows as a consequence !]**

- B. The explanation is found in the value of the cleansing BLOOD !
1. The efficacy of this blood is that it "cleanses from all (*every kind of*) sin. The tense of the verb, "cleanses" is in the *present-active* and literally says, " stands me continuously cleansed from every kind of sin".
  2. "It is not mere acts of sin that are in question here, but the deeper problem of our condition as sinners" [*Sir Robert Anderson in "The Gospel and its Ministry - page 176*] It is not the statement of a *fact*, merely, but of a *truth*! Truths are 'greater' and deeper than facts!
    - a. If you compare I John 1: vs.10 with vs. 8, it clearly shows the "denier" of his condition as such (*i.e. as a sinner*) to be lost ! These verses refer to those who claim neither to have sinned - nor - to have a sin-nature, and in either case, this is the same as rejecting the revelation of the "true light" that now shines ( I John 2:8) - **leaving them in darkness !**
    - b. He is lost because he rejects the light, and he does so in *two* ways: through *hypocrisy* (vs. 6) and *impenitence* (vs. 10.)
  3. In appropriating the value of His Cleansing Blood, (rather than rejecting it as in "b." [above] ), one steps out into the open and confesses himself to be a sinner. (vs. 9) **This is a parallel clarification of vs. 7.**

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### ***Excursus Regarding the BLOOD And Its CONTINUOUS Cleansing Power !***

- A. Whenever the benefits or the results of the death of Christ are ascribed to his BLOOD, the figure is borrowed from the *types*.
- B. And the particular type, in the light of which we are to understand the word, must be that of some offering which was for *sin*; and **one which was for the people generally**, as distinguished from those which were for individuals; and further, it must be an offering whose benefits were abiding (lasting for ONE YEAR!) This confines us to the offering on the day of *atonement*. (see Lev. 16:30,34 - Read it)
- C. In answer to the type of Lev. 16 and the ANNUAL sacrifice of Atonement, Christ has died and risen and gone up to God, and now HIS blood cleanseth from all sin ONCE-FOR-ALL - FOREVER !!  
----"it is not that it avails to accomplish a succession of acts of cleansing for the

*believer, but that its efficacy remains to cleanse him continuously. It is not in order that it may thus cleanse him that the believer confesses his sin : his only right to the place he holds, even as he confesses, depends on the fact that it does thus cleanse him. "* [Sir Robert Anderson - page 178]

(NOTE: If you are thinking of "individual" sins (one-by-one) needing to be confessed to keep up-to-date always- so as never to be "out of fellowship", think of this !!

"God knows exactly what we are, He knows every thought, every motive, and nothing IS or can be hidden from Him. In this assurance the Child of God walks; he knows God is looking into his heart, and sees all things. He does not fear the look of God, who is light; nay, he is glad of it. All that he is in himself, His God knows, and he is aware that he can never take God by surprise by what he does, because God knows what he is, though often he is a wonder of evil to himself. There is not the thinnest gossamer of veil between him and God, nor yet a single step which he can ever take away from the eye of God."

---"THE CHILD OF GOD"

--H.B.

Witherby, page 289

- D. Thus, for the believer, (not the impenitent or hypocrite -as noted in ( 2,b) on page 12), the condition of being *in*, and *walking in*, the light with a continuing acknowledgment of personal sin (as a sinner) - it is for SUCH that the BLOOD provides *forgiveness* and *moral cleansing* on a continuing basis. **The JOY that comes from simply believing this truth in simple faith is the FOUNTAIN out of which flows the solution to many of our struggles in Christian living.**

- \* The parallel passage to this "continuing acknowledgment" is the exhortation in Heb. 4:16; 7:25 and 10:22.

(Note: Sir Robert Anderson on the above texts) - "*As the tenses of the verbs indicate (present, middle, subjunctive), this is the habit of the true Christian who is ever conscious of his need of mercy and grace. Still more plainly does this appear in 7:25 where Christians are characteristically called, "comers unto God", drawing near to Him being their normal attitude and habit....In the opening words of Chapt. 10 therefore, the worshipper is described as one who thus comes or draws near. This same word is prominent in the exhortation of vs. 22" - (Hebrews, page 40)*

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**Notes on II. Total Forgiveness Continued-----**

C. A Faithful and Righteous God Stands Behind the Wonderful Promise of this Complete Forgiveness and Cleansing:

1. By His Faithfulness to His own nature and to the value of the complete work of His Son at Calvary which satisfies that nature. One word describes that total work; it is called *propitiation*. ( see Rom. 3: 25)
  - a. God does not forgive merely by an arbitrary decision of his will or because of leniency that shrinks from inflicting pain, but because the work of His Son has so completely dealt with sin that the justice of a Holy God has been satisfied. And, in faithfulness to *that* work, He freely forgives.
  - b. Thus, God has found a *righteous* ("just") basis upon which the offer of forgiveness and cleansing may be continuous. (Alford, in his Greek NT, translates the use of the aorist tense in the word, *forgive*, this way: "*faithful and just in order that he may give continued remission of the guilt of each committed sin*") (The aorist tense merely states the promise of forgiveness as a *fact* as a corollary to I John 1:7)
  
2. This truth of *propitiation* is very important in helping us truly believe that *fellowship* with a Holy God, and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is really ours as we walk in the Light that shows us up to be what we really are!!
  - a. The meaning of "propitiation":
    - (1) *"It is to cover (metaphorically) by a gift, offering, or rite, or (if God be the subject) to treat as covered; the ideas associated with the word being to make (or treat as) harmless, non-existent, or inoperative, to annul (so far as God's notice or regard is concerned), to withdraw from God's sight, with the attached idea of restoring to His favour, freeing from sin and restoring to holiness" - ["The Tests Of Life" by Robert Law, page 161]*

[ **Right Here We Do Well To Consider An Interesting Note By *Charles H. Spurgeon***]

**"According to this gracious covenant (the new covenant of Hebrews) the Lord treats His people as if they had never sinned. Practically, He forgets all their trespasses. Sins of all kinds He treats as if they had never been; as if they were quite erased from His memory. O miracle of grace! God here does that which in certain aspects is impossible to Him. His mercy works miracles which far transcend all other miracles.**

**Our God ignores our sin now that the sacrifice of Jesus has ratified the covenant. We may rejoice in Him without fear that He will be provoked to anger against us because of our iniquities. See ! He puts us among the children; He accepts us as righteous; He takes delight in us as if we were perfectly holy. He even puts us into places of trust; makes us guardians of His honor, trustees of the crown jewels,**

**stewards of the Gospel. He counts us worthy, and gives us a ministry; this is the highest and most special proof that He does not remember our sins. Even when we forgive an enemy, we are very slow to trust him; we judge it to be imprudent to do so. But the Lord forgets our sins, and treats us as if we had never erred. O my soul, what a promise is this ! Believe it and be happy."**

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- b. Christ *is the "propitiatory sacrifice"* that so satisfied a Holy God with reference to our sins(yours and mine) - (Rom. 3:25) -that, what otherwise would have been a throne of judgment, is now a mercy seat. In fact the word "mercy seat" in Heb. 9:5 is this same word. To put it simply, it is no longer the "sin" question: but the "Son" question. Take a good look at II Cor. 5:19 and ask yourself why, even in the offer of reconciliation to the "world", he **no longer "imputes their trespasses unto them" ??** And why would He then impute failure and sins to you, a believer, so as to *break your fellowship (your participation in His very Life) with Himself??*

***[The Fact Of This Total Forgiveness Includes:]***

**III. PROVISION FOR THE INEVITABILITY OF FURTHER SINNING.** (I John 2:1,2)

( Note: *It is at this point in our study that we come to the question of what effect "sin" has in the Christian's daily walk in "communion" with a Holy God; both from God's point of view (objective), and how it affects us as believers (subjective). Please give this careful study. )*

- A. Notice the AIM of the Apostle John (2:1) and, as we will notice, in the entire epistle, *"that ye sin not !"*
1. Ruth Paxson has put it this way. The Bible nowhere teaches that we can come to the place where we are no longer *able* to sin; but rather, we can come to the place where we are able ( in a given instance) *not to sin!*
  2. The Book of Romans makes very clear that there is victory over sin. We are going to discover as we get further into this Epistle that this is exactly what John expected would have happened to us when we received Eternal Life. (e.g. chapt. 3:8,9)
- B. In the event we DO sin, (*not live in the practice of it!*) God has provided a two-fold resource for meeting our need.
1. We have a *paraclete* with the Father who is a friendly representative who defends one's cause, usually by influential intercession.
    - a. In John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit is a *paraclete* who maintains Christ's cause with the believer. (14:20, 15:26, 16:14) Here, Christ is the believer's *advocate* who pleads his cause with the Father.
    - b. Please note that the ministry of our *advocate* does not wait upon our confession, rather, *when we sin, we have an advocate !*
    - c. But, because a Holy God, rather, because even an all-forgiving, over-flowing Father's Love is not sufficient to absolve the *guilt* of sin, it is necessary to relate the office of *paraclete* with the *fact of propitiation*. (Review C, 2, a, on page 15)
  2. The *person*, "Jesus Christ, the righteous", IS the propitiation for our sins. (John does not speak of Christ as *making propitiation* for our sins.)

- a. Right here we need to go back to our discussion about the "blood" on page 12 because there is a correlation between the ministry of a paraclete (as John uses it) and the High Priest's duties on the day of Atonement from Leviticus. (see Heb. 9:7- read it !)

\* For the bottom-line exhortation based on this, compare Heb. 4:16; 7:25; 10:22. And in these invitations to "draw near" you have an explanation as to why I John 1:9 is in the "present" tense. Also, see note by Sir Robert Anderson on the top of page 14.

- b. Just as the High Priest enjoyed the right of entering within the veil and making intercession for the sins of the people, so Christ's prerogative of advocacy is grounded on the fact that He is our propitiation. (Heb. 9:12)

\* "Were it not for the work of our Great High Priest in the presence of God, our sins as Christians would preclude our ever entering that Holy Presence during all our life on earth." (Sir Robert Anderson, Hebrews, pg. 41)

- c. And just as it was only in the High Priest's appearing before God with the atoning blood that the act of atonement was completed, so it is through Christ's advocacy that His propitiation becomes operative (real).

\* With reference to "real": The objective fact of Christ's being our propitiation makes it true that our sin does not alter God's view or attitude about us. **IT IS "WE" WHO ARE AFFECTED. "WE" FEEL THE CLOUD OR SENSE OF DISTANCE, OR THE SENSE OF A WALL BETWEEN US. Just in proportion to our knowledge of God, and our appreciation of the blessings of Grace, will be our sense of MORAL DISTANCE from God !!**

**(ILLUSTRATION)**

*The all-forgiving love of the Father is like the waves of a great reservoir throbbing against that wall (see above)--He, our propitiation has opened the floodgates from the Divine side (it stands open !) --WE, from the human side allow it to flood through the barrier (because of our Advocates intercession) by our penitent confession.*

- (1) This, I believe, is where confession comes in. Not that I John 1:9 deals with sins, one by one, but that here, through Christ's two-fold ministry, (initiated by Him as an advocate), I am brought to judgment of "self" and to dealing with God about my sin.
- (2) This is in exact accord with how the two-fold aspect of the great sin-offering on the day of Atonement also meets my double need. (Lev. 16; Num. 19 (red heifer offering))
  - (a) Lev. 16 - sins (as to their guilt) put away forever
  - (b) Num. 19 - as to their defilement (not back to the blood) - but in the red-heifer aspect; the offering killed, utterly consumed and water mixed with the ashes of it speaks of the Word bringing us to self

judgment. ( I Cor. 11)

3. Thus, the two acts; atonement completed (propitiation), and Christ's advocacy combine to constitute the one reconciling work by which there is abiding fellowship between God and His sinning people. (See Heb. 2:17, where the use of the word, *reconciliation* "is not referring to the redemption of a lost world, but the at-one-ment for the sins of a redeemed people.")----Sir Robert Anderson. "Gospel And Its Ministry" pg. 188

## OUTWARD EVIDENCES OF GENUINE, CONTINUING FELLOWSHIP

### Chapter 3

#### I. Introduction:

[1] The paragraph of verses (1:5 - 2:2) that we have just finished has covered a full circle of the basic truth of this Epistle. With the subject, "Eternal Life" at its center, we have seen

--

[a] that this life is in a person,

[b] that, when we receive this person (Christ) as our personal Saviour, (confessing our sinner-hood) we become actual participants (have fellowship) in the very life of a Holy God,

[c] that, as we carry on our daily walk, we do so under the full revealing gaze (walking in the Light) of that Holy God, and finally,

[d] that, as we go forward in this walk, should we fall into sin ("if any man sin"), all is not hopeless because of the Perfect Work ("propitiation") of our personal "paraclete" (advocate ) whose Blood, in continuous efficacy, cleanses from every kind of sin.

\* *"Jesus Christ, the righteous" takes up every detail of our poor, faulty, erring lives and prompts us to judge ourselves in our path here below.*

[2] Keeping the key verse of our Epistle in mind (5:13), John is going to put the genuineness of our profession of "Fellowship" to a series of *Tests*. It is altogether possible that the wonderful, liberating truth (summarized above) will cause the tempted Christian to say to himself: "There is hope for the backslider; then I am not lost if I backslide! God is a merciful Father; Christ died to expiate all sin, and is my intercessor. If under the storm and press of evil I should yield, His hand will be stretched out to save me. I may stumble, but I shall not utterly fall". The Apostle Paul also suggests the possibility of this very attitude in Rom. 6: 1 ff. (I suggest you look back there and review)

[3] This series of *Tests*, then, will prove to be *keys* to the *Maintenance* of our "Fellowship" as **proof** of our possession of Eternal Life. They will enable us to "know" ( 5:13) with assurance that we, indeed, have this Life.

### I. THE TEST OF OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD.

- (I John 2: 3-6)

A. Knowing how easy it is to slip into *legalism* and law-keeping as a by-works relationship, we must probe John's *meaning* in this context.

1. The first step in helping with the *meaning* is to look closely at the grammar. "And hereby we continually know [ present tense] that we have come to know Him [perfect tense], if we continually keep [present tense] his commandments".

Application: The keeping of his commandments is the habit, the rule, the "way of life" of the individual.



2. It is called "keeping His Word" in vs. 5. "This keeping of God's commandments is not simply doing what they prescribe - as men observe rules by force of necessity. It signifies observant care in doing what is prompted from the heart, planted there in the new nature that is the product of the New Birth. To such God's law is sacred and His precepts are esteemed in determining the course of life." - *An Outline and Analysis of the First Epistle Of John* - Gingrich (page 62)
3. His commandments are also defined in I John 3: 23, 24 as a *saving trust* in Christ resulting in an overflowing *love of the brethren*.
4. Keeping His commandments is called *abiding in him* (3: 24; 2:6). This is to live in the full joy of complete acceptance in Christ and in continuous, utter dependence on Him. Thus, to *walk as He walked* (2:6)

a. Jesus walked in **complete dependence** upon His Father. [Please look up the following verses: John 3:27; 5:19; 12:49; 8:29; 14:10; Rom. 15:3; Heb. 5:8.]<sup>\*</sup>

*\*Note: The same life is in US as in Him !*

*--We have like-mindedness with God.*

*--In our fallenness we cannot have even **one common thought with Him !***

*--Now we are partakers of His nature (II Peter 1:4) with like thoughts, wishes, feelings, & common objects with Himself.*

*--The reality of this is for **every child of God !!***

B. With this "meaning" given to obedience, we can see that this is one of the key qualities of "Life (eternal)" in which John was so eager for us to *know* that we had become partners (*had fellowship in*) -5:13.

1. An accurate translation would be (last phrase in vs. 5): This is how "we perceive (we are finding out and getting to know) that we have known God - that we exist in God" (vs. 5)
2. That last phrase in vs. 5 "know that we are *in Him*" also helps us realize that he is talking about *relationship* and not merely *communion* !!

[ *Note: It is important to note that these same tests that enable us to have a positive assurance of our relationship, (because they are part of our life-style), are also things that interrupt our communion. But please remember, the "cloud", or "barrier" in interrupted communion is one that **WE** put there; **NOTHING**<sup>\*</sup> on God's part has changed. "Life-style is the key word here!]*

<sup>\*</sup> See the note again by Spurgeon on Page 10

<sup>\*</sup> Further Note From C.H.M. Vol. II Page 5 of 5th article: " *Our sins can never come into God's presence, inasmuch as Christ who bore them all, and put them away, is there instead....If we sin, conscience will feel it; yea, must feel it; The Holy Ghost will make us feel it. But has our sin made its way into God's presence? --God forbid" "Though sin cannot affect God's thoughts in reference to us, it can, and does affect our thoughts in reference to Him !"*

C. Again, the believer with this obedient life-style evidences that God's love "is perfected"

in him (i.e. in the believer) 2: 5

1. In comparing I John 4:17 we will discover that, in this particular context, John is neither talking about *our* love to God, nor *His* love to us, (separately considered) but that which unites both in one common conception - the Love which is the nature of God (4:8), and which is also the nature of those who are "begotten" of Him. (4:7) (*Proof! Evidence! that we are "sharers" of His Very Life!!*)
2. That this Divine Love dwells in any man is witnessed by the fact that he keeps God's word.
3. "Perfect" love is love that is consummated in *action*- bearing fruit in actual obedience. ( Cmp John 14:21; Rom. 13:10)

## II. THE TEST OF LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

-(John moves from obedience in *general* to something *specific*) The above commandments are summed up in and characterized by *Love!* ( **2: 7-11**) *It is the law of love as stated in John 15:12 and II John 5; also known as the "law of Christ"*

A. The explanation of the commandment.

1. What is meant by "old" commandment ? (vs. 7)
  - a. "Old" in the sense that they had heard it before. (John 15:12) *"This is my commandment, that ye love one-another, as I have loved you."*
  - b. "Old" in the sense that they "had had it from the beginning" (vs.7) - i.e. from the time of His incarnation while Christ was with them bodily. In other words, John says: "I'm telling you something that you should already know".
2. What, then, is meant by "New" commandment ? (vs. 8)
  - a. The answer is found in John 13:34. *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one-another"*
  - b. It is new in the sense that the same "old" commandment is made possible *now* in a way it was not possible before; with the "stream" of new Eternal Life ( the Life of The Eternal God) coursing through our being. ["Look at the people in the old dispensation. They had this command to love, and yet they found it very difficult. But in the Lord Jesus Christ we see it fulfilled and carried out. The Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Law of God. He loved men and women in the sense that the Old Testament meant; it has been realized in Him and true in Him. But not only that, says John, it is also realized in You."] -----*Martyn Lloyd Jones - "Walking With God" Page 57.*
  - c. John then gives the *reason* why this commandment, made effective by the Life-source (Eternal Life) that was common both to the Lord Jesus and to the believer (*"true in Him and in you"*- vs 8), was further characterized as *new*; it was because the full light of the Gospel revelation ( I John 1:5), shining in full blaze, was being walked in by the believer, causing the realm of darkness in which he once walked to fade out of his experience. ( A better translation of "the darkness is past" would be, "the darkness is passing")

B. The *application* of the commandment in the light of this *explanation*.(vs.9-11.)

1. [Note:] This is where we must remind ourselves of how we have decided to interpret

*light and darkness* on the bottom of page 8 and on to page 9.

"*If I am in the light, I am a partaker of the Divine Nature; my moral nature becomes the same with that of God*"--Candlish on I John, pg. 117.

2. Is the person who hates his brother (vs. 9) merely *out of fellowship* or is he *lost*? (The word "hateth" is a present participle)  
(It would probably be good to review Col.1:13, I Pet.2:9 again!)
3. Please note also that this kind of person is not only surrounded by darkness but darkness is *in* him and he is blind. Can this be any other than a lost person?
4. By contrast, the real test of the genuineness of one's relationship is *does he really love his brother?* Orthodoxy is not enough!

### III. THE TEST OF SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. I John 2:12-17. \*

\* "There are no more solemn words addressed to Christian people anywhere in the Scriptures than these"  
----Martyn Lloyd Jones

- A. A reassuring review of doctrinal basics before the next, tougher challenge regarding worldliness is given - this, to ward off discouragement and remove all excuse for potential failure. (*Don't think these tests are all hopelessly impossible !!*) **Without foundational basics, these exhortations are futile!** The basis of the Apostles' urgent appeal is going to be the *identity* and *experience* of those to whom he writes - to **encourage them!**-(I John 2:12-14)
  1. Note, first, that John writes, using a double set of triplets; first to believers in general (*God's Little Children*), then dividing them into two categories, *Fathers* and *Young Men*.
  2. Note again, the first set of triplets is in the *present tense*; the second set is in the *past tense*. The significance of this is, that in the first he speaks of His position as He is writing *now*, "I write"; then he realizes what may be the position of those to whom he writes when they receive what he is writing now. John is literally in his last days (*an old man*), and by the time some receive this letter, he realizes he may be deceased, and they will receive what he *has written*.
  3. Considering, now, each appeal by itself; each, by way of an affirmation of their experience.
    - a. First, believers in general, he calls them "little children" (vs. 12,13)
      - (1) He encourages them by the reminder that their sins are forgiven! (Please review again what we studied in 1: 7,9)
      - (2) Note: even though it says "little children" in both places in this text, two different words in original are used: *tekvia* is a little child in kinship by birth; *paidia*, a little child who, through the experience of discipline is beginning his education. One becomes a *tekvian* by forgiveness of sins, a *paidion* by education - the beginning of their education at least opens up to them a simple, but experiential "knowledge of the Father" (Look up

again John 17:3)

- b. Next, he appeals to Fathers. You will notice that, both in the present tense and in the past tense, the appeal is the same. These are the more mature persons (not merely *men* only) who have gained a knowledge of "Him that is from the beginning" - i.e. His eternal relationship to the Father and His unique oneness with Him. (See I John 1:1 again) "These are the elder members of the body of believers who have become ripe with experience and mature in the faith." [*An Outline And Analysis Of First John* - Gingrich, pg. 80]
- c. Finally, there are the Young Men: Three things John says about them.
  - (1) "Ye have overcome the wicked one". Notice that this is in the past tense, *have overcome*. That is explained like this:
    - [a] they have learned through their *identity* with Christ that HE has overcome the wicked one. (See I John 4:4; Heb. 2:14; Ephes. 6:11), [b] the very moment we first believed, we should have learned that the dominion of sin over us has been broken. (Rom. 6:14), [c] " It is in the years of early manhood, for the most part, that the decisive battles of life are fought out. It is then that the inward conflicts between the spirit and the flesh are waged most bitterly; when the passions are in their first heat, and when the conscience and heart are most impressionable.

Personal chastity, a manly self-respect and self-mastery, are gained at that period or are, probably, **never gained at all!**" - (*Gingrich, page 85*) This is the significance of the *past tense*!

- (2) "Ye are strong"; this does not mean that they were strong in and of themselves. II Cor. 13: 4 explains it this way, "*though He was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God.....*" John is saying that "young men" have learned the truth of Phil. 4:13.
- (3) "the Word of God abideth in you"; [a] these young men have allowed the truth of God to take up residence in them and dominate their lives. When the Word of God is understood and applied, Satan's attacks are neutralized. We need to ask ourselves what place the Scriptures actually have in our lives.

## B. The Appeal For Separation From the World. ( 2:15-17)

1. The *identity* of the "world" about which John is writing. John uses this term more often than any of the other N.T. writers - over 20 times in this Epistle and nearly 80 times in his Gospel.
  - a. It is NOT the "world" of the natural universe.
  - b. It is NOT the "world" as God made it and rules it by His providence.
  - c. It is NOT the "world" of natural existence, i.e. the world of sense and physical activity, the daily work by which men make their living.
  - d. It IS the "world" "of fallen human nature (in the aggregate) *acting itself out in*

*the human family; moulding and fashioning the framework of human society in accordance with its own tendencies" - Robert S. Candlish - First Epistle Of John, page 144*

- e. It IS this whole organized system, authored by Satan, himself, and is the dominating characteristic of the entire "age" in which we live. (We will discuss in class an interesting analysis and comparison of two important texts in this connection: Gal. 1:4 and Ephes. 2:3)
- f. The " term refers to an organized system of values, goals, methods, motivations, and standards that are under Satan's influence and contrary to God and His Word.....A Christian is "worldly" when his desires, goals, standards, and motivations resemble Satan's system."

*Dr. Paul Benware in "Digging Deeper"*

-Moody Monthly

- 2. The *all-encompassing nature* of the "world", the clarification of his appeal - vs. 16 - "For all that is in the world": [Note: *cmp Gen. 3:6 and Luke 4: 1-13 where there is the same three-fold attraction that tempted Eve and which Satan used to challenge our Lord*]

- a. The lust of the flesh ! *Lust*, in this context means: *illicit desire!*

- (1) "Minding" (Rom. 8:5) the things of the flesh vs. things of the Spirit is a matter of Life and death. - the former is "of this world"
- (2) It is not the normal appetites of our physical bodies that is referred to here, but "every species of disordered appetite" (*Findlay, on 1st John - pg. 218*) - described by the word, *lust* !
- (3) "Flesh" is not the *object* of the desire, but the *nature* of whatever it is that we desire; in this case, wrong food.

[Note: *compare Gen. 3:6, a desire for a food that was forbidden*]

- b. The lust of the eyes !

- (1) This involves unlawful desires that appeal to our *sight* - the desire to acquire - it is concerned with *taste* as distinguished from *appetite*. The most obvious example is *covetousness* !
- (2) It is NOT things necessarily that the *flesh* could lust after by means of the eye-gate, like "looking upon a woman to lust after her"; the lust of the eyes is something different from this. "The lust of the eyes means also a kind of vanity which delights in pomp and mighty splendor, in an appearance, in anything that appeals to the eyes.....merely the appearance making an impression." - *Lloyd Jones*
- [ Note: *again compare Gen. 3:6, "pleasant to the eyes"*.
- (3) "The phrase includes every variety of gratification of which sight is the instrument, from the love of mere material splendor and vulgar display in apparel and personal adornments, pomp and luxury in the appointments of public or private life.....to the most refined cult of the physically beautiful in nature or in art."

-----from "*The Tests of Life*"--Robert Law,

pg. 150

c. The pride (vainglory) of life:

- (1) This is descriptive of what results from the attainment of both the *lust of the flesh* and the *lust of the eye*.
- (2) "The foolish pride of worldly possession and success, the vain sense of security that is based ( like a house on the sand) upon the false estimate of the stability and worth of worldly things"....(and inseparable from this kind of pride "is the supercilious consciousness of superiority to one's fellow-men; possible only when the sense of dependence upon God has been lost" -(*ibid.*, Robert Law, page 152) ( e.g. see Acts 12:20 -23 & 1st Cor. 4:7)
- (3) The "vainglory of life" that John ascribes to "the world" is therefore an ostentation of worldly possessions or advantages, the disposition to "show off" and to make other people look small". It means a pride in oneself generally at the expense of someone else. One translation has it; "boasting"  
[ *Note: this was the temptation of our Lord, "Cast thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee--" as though Jesus should have paraded His trust in the Father, and His supernatural powers, to the applause of the multitude*]

3. The reasons for not loving the world.

- a. It is a denial of our love to God **and of our knowledge of Him !**  
--vs. 15 -"If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in Him"  
--James 4:4 - Whosoever, therefore will be a friend of the world *is the enemy of God !*  
--Luke 16: 13 ".....You cannot serve God and Mammon !"
- b. It is a denial of the "Life" that is in us.  
--vs. 16 -"All that is in the world.....**is not of**(from) **the Father**"- it does not *originate* from Him.  
--"These things have not their origin in His will, have no affinity with His nature, are directly antagonistic to the Life He intends for men and to which He calls men". (*ibid.*-Robert Law- page 132)  
----If one claims that Christ is living in him, he cannot love the things that do not have their source in Him; these are incompatible !
- c. It evidences ignorance of the *real truth of the Gospel* !  
--See Gal. 1:4 - the very purpose of the Cross was deliverance from this present evil 'age' (world) - the age in which WE live; whose main characteristic is the "fashion of this world"  
(1 Cor. 7:31, which, indeed, is passing away).  
-- The world is 'passing away' (*passive voice- is being caused to pass away*); the Gospel message has to do with that which is eternal - lasts forever. It is *contradictory* to attach oneself to that which, because of sin, is "rotting" away while boasting of a relationship in possession of Eternal Life!!

---In contrast, the one " *doing* (present participle) the will of God abideth forever"  
This is the person who is truly saved! Please check the following Scriptures  
carefully - Matt. 7:21; I Peter 4:2

#### IV. THE TEST OF ACCURATE TEACHING REGARDING THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. I John 2: 18 -27

A. The previous three conditions for maintaining our fellowship with God have been those things that originate within ourselves - certain possibilities of failure resident within the individual believer. But there is also a danger that arises from among the professing 'church' (see 2:26) - those who may be among us for the purpose of seducing us away from the truth. There **is a spiritual conflict** about which we should be aware because of these seducers.

1. It is important to realize the *nature* of this conflict.

( 2:18,19, 22,23)

a. Clarifying the terms:

---the last "hour" - in light of the fact that we believe that Christ's return is imminent (at any time), it is important for us to ask, *which* hour - or which "last time" ? As dispensationalists, we recognize that there are the *last days* of the Jewish era (Matt. 24:3), and the *last days* of the Church age (II Tim. 3:1). Although it is evident that the early Church looked for Christ's return at any moment, many epochs of church history have come and gone and there have been waves of crises at various times. And, during each one, their expectancy would rise - in John's day this was one of those times. He even pin-points it down to the last 'hour'!! (That IS the word he used!)

---The Antichrist - the including of the article "*the*" in the original means that a definite person called the antichrist would appear on the scene in the latter days. Daniel 7 - 11 and Rev. 13 are very clear about that. An antichrist is a person who is not necessarily *against* Christ but is a *false* Christ, putting himself forward *in the stead of* Christ. Thus there were many false leaders, even in John's day, who presented false teaching in the name of Christ. Their departing from the faith was evidence that they were not really true believers. (vs.19) Because of vs. 19, we must look carefully at-----

----The True Believing Church Itself - We must thoroughly discuss their identity because of the difficult days in which we live.

(1) What about us ? Do we have a vital union with the Lord Jesus ?

(2) According to vs. 19, there were those were apparently a part of the common fellowship of believers - to all outward appearances they were part of the group.

(3) Their real status was - *Not Of Us* - they were *not* sharers of His Life.

(4) Their departure revealed their true character (See II Tim. 2:19)

(a) A time of falling away is always a time when the true believer's *faith* is under attack! People become frantic and desperate and say, "what can we do to save the Church?" The idea is *false* to believe the world is

- getting "better" and "better"
- (b) The Church's *first* consideration at a time like this is for *purity of doctrine!*
  - (c) Because of dwindling numbers people begin to say, "Don't be so concerned about differences of *belief* (doctrine).
- b. Clarifying their **methodology**: there are various teachers of the gospel who, while they profess to believe the gospel, pervert its teaching in such a way that they eventually destroy it. The apostle Paul warns of these very men and describes their method in Acts 20: 28 - 30. The bottom line of what they teach is literally a **denial of the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ.**
2. The special *anointing* for *recognizing* those false leaders of the conflict. (vs. 20,21 & 27) - ( some had left as noted above -1,a-(4); what keeps *us* true ?)
- a. The *anointing* that is spoken of here is that they had been given the person of the Holy Spirit. The history of the word *anointing* is that it is ceremonial, and anointing with oil was used in the O.T. in the setting apart of prophet, priest or king for their special duties. Thus, in the N.T. (Acts 10:38) Jesus was anointed for ministry and, subsequently, this same gift was poured out on the entire church. (Acts 10:45) - see also Ephes. 4:8.
  - b. The *results* of this anointing for the believers was two-fold: [*a*] "ye know all things" (vs. 20), and [*b*] "ye need not that any man teach you" (vs. 27). There has been a great dispute about the meaning of these verses, but the bottom line after all that we could discuss about them is: the Christian has a spiritual understanding that the natural man does not have (I Cor. 2: 13,14). This is why these believers were able to hold fast to the truth. ( I John 2:21)
3. Arguments with which to fortify ourselves in this conflict as we hold fast to the truth. (I John 2:22,23, 25,28)
- a. We must remind ourselves in no uncertain terms that any who deny the essentials of the Gospel - such as the deity of Jesus Christ - are liars! (vs. 22)
- Note - *Two serious errors were being taught in John's day and against which John in his entire epistle seems to be fighting: [a] The thought that Jesus was the Christ but was in no sense a real human being. It was only a phantom that walked the earth and was crucified. [b] Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary...that at His baptism the Christ descended upon Him in the form of a dove....that at the end of His life, the Christ left Him again.*
- b. Next, we must remind ourselves of the consequences of believing this lie.
    - (1) It is a denial of the *nature* of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - (2) It is a denial of the whole truth of the incarnation.
    - (3) It is a denial of the Trinity - consequently also of the atonement!



**FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN THE *CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE*  
OF ETERNAL LIFE - I John 2:29 - 3:24**

Chapter 4

Introduction:

[1] Here at 2:29 we come to a new section in John's letter. Like a spiral of thought going *higher* (or *deeper*, depending on how you look at it), John goes back over the evidences - now showing their source internally (coming from the *inside* out - like the sap in the Vine that actually produces the fruit.) The previous tests of the validity of our possession of Eternal life have been evidenced by our outward practices. Here are the evidences coming from within:

I. The actual *practice* of righteousness is the evidence that one is truly born of God. *Life that is begotten of God is by innate necessity a life of truceless antagonism to sin.*

*(Right here in 3:1,2 John pauses to interrupt his flow of his argument [as he did in 2:12-14] to remind them of a positive basis for the kind of life he is going to say is the effect of being Born Again)*

II. Now, seemingly overcome in amazement with the prospect that one can literally be a "born one" of God (3:1), and that this includes ultimately becoming *just like Him*, John declares that the second internal evidence is that such a person has as his AIM *purifying himself*. (vs. 3)

*"to strive after His purity is the inexorable test of having the hope of His glory"*

"The Tests Of Life" - Rob't Law - page 214

*"Not every one who cherishes the hope of Glory, seeks this life of purity; but he alone who aims at the absolute purity of Christ and can be satisfied with no lower aim, possesses it in fact. He alone has in him that Life which will blossom out in immortal perfection when it is brought into the full sunshine of Christ's manifested presence." - ibid. - page 216*

A. The serious observation of the above quotes is really but a logical evidence of our truly believing, in fact, the wonderful truth of vs. 2. If we really believe the truth of vs.2, the result in vs. 3 would *inevitably be our practice!* Practice is built on the base or our thorough understanding of our *standing* and *position*.

1. What we truly *believe* is the basis of our growth in holiness. When we fail in our practice of holiness, it shows our belief to be defective - *it is really unbelief!*

a. When holiness is made an entity in itself, you produce rules, regulations - you become legalistic and self-righteous.

2. So, then, anyone who really believes and has the hope of vs. 2 in him (i.e. in Christ), evidences it by:

- a. Purifying himself. Note: "Cleansing" is dealing on the surface with evil and pollution; "purifying" is something that happens within, in the mind, in our essential nature.
- b. This is an active process (not passive). II Cor. 7:1 says the same thing. Also, Col. 3:2,5.

III. The third evidence as to our conscious possession of Eternal Life flows naturally out of the second: the purifying process involves dealing honestly and intelligently with SIN - it is **INADMISSIBLE !!** (vs. 4-9)

- A. Sin is *lawlessness*, vs. 4. This is not a statement about one *act* or *one attitude* or *another* as being sin in particular, but it is to set up as a rule of life *one's own will* instead of the absolutely good will of God.
- B. The Lord Jesus, the perfectly sinless one, became incarnate in order to perfectly deal with the whole problem of sin: *He took them away!* (vs. 5) What does this mean ?
  1. The word *our* is not in the text of vs. 5- "John is thinking of the abolition of sin as this is to be realized in detail, and realized without limit: similarly it was said in Chapt. 1:9 that God is faithful and righteous, that He should forgive us our sins and *cleanse us from every unrighteousness.* " -(George Findlay in "John's Epistles" - page 276.
  2. Note a parallel passage of interest in Heb. 9:26, " once for all at the consummation of the ages *for the abolition of sins* through His sacrifice".
  3. "For 'taking away of sins' signifies more than the sacrificial bearing of sins; it adds to this the idea of *removal.*"(ibid, pg. 175)
- C. Further, we need to be aware of the serious *consequences* of harboring sin and living in its practice; *it is to dissociate oneself from Christ and give evidence that his profession has never been genuine.* (vs. 6,7) - I John 2:1,2 **DID** give some space for the exception of sinning, but this passage warns of *habit* and *character*.

IV. The fourth evidence (or, in this case **observation**) that gives assurance that we indeed possess Life Eternal is noting the **tenses of the verbs** between verses 8 and 10. This helps us realize that John is talking about **habit** and **character** and not about *individual acts of sin*.

- A. Children of God (vs. children of the devil) have character traits and life-habits that distinguish them one from another. vs. 8-10.
- B. Also, observe that John is talking about *all* Christians as over against *only* those who have victory; meaning that only those *abiding* in Him (vs. 6) are the ones who do not sin. If a man does not abide in Christ he is not a Christian at all !
- C. Another bone of contention in these verses has to do with vs. 9. We must study this verse to see whether John means that it is only the new nature that does not sin - or - does he refer to the whole person? But the Greek text insists: the child of God does not *do* (that's the verb used in the present tense) - does not *practice* sin.

V. The fifth evidence of *knowing* that we indeed have Eternal Life is that, because of a complete exchange of natures, **true believers love the brethren.** (vs.10-18)

*(John puts this truth in double form: this is an **exhortation** - and - a test of the reality of*

*a relationship as well)*

- A. The evidence flows naturally from *what we ARE*: we have literally passed from death unto life (vs. 14) - not our old nature improved - rather exchanged for a new one. (Gal. 2:20)
1. Do not think of this merely as a new "nature" placed in us along side of an *unchanged* old one; rather, an *exchange* took place through which we have been "translated" (Col. 1:13) out of darkness (death) into the Kingdom of His dear Son.
  2. The death we passed *from* involved: [*a*] we did not know God, i.e. we were *outside* of the Life God gives, [*b*] we were dead to spiritual things (Ephes. 2:1, I Cor. 2:14), [*c*] and our whole former life-style is described in Ephes. 2:2,3. Rom. 6:6 tells us that we (the *old man*) have died to all that we were in Adam (crucified to this former life-style).
  3. By contrast, the *Life* we "passed unto" is part of a whole new creation, (II Cor. 5:17) and, by new birth, we have become one of God's "little children" - sharing (having "fellowship in") God's very life and nature.(II Pet.1:4)
- B. In pressing his point as to characteristics of what we *are*, John proceeds to show by contrast how *unlike* the world we are in character.
1. Using Cain as an example John shows that he was the opposite of what the believer in (1)( *above*) is: [*a*] he is of that wicked one, the devil, [*b*] he abides in death (vs.14), [*c*] he does not have Eternal Life abiding in him (vs. 15), and this kind of person *hates* the true believer (vs. 13).
- C. This "love of the brethren" is patterned and described for us in Chapt. 3: 16 - 18)

*In Summary:*

These five affirmations, then, assure us truly that we are in possession of God's very quality of life, Eternal Life, and that we are *of the truth*. (vs. 19).

- A. This, in turn, has an effect upon our confidence in the God we say we have trusted. And this also has a direct relationship to our prayer life. (vv 20 - 22)
- B. If our experience becomes clouded, and doubts arise concerning our relationship (through unbelief, perhaps), and we feel a sense of condemnation in our hearts that hinders our prayer-life, we must go before the Lord and rehearse with Him (in review) the precious truths of these three chapters we have been studying. If known sin is what is causing the cloud, be assured it is the Advocate of I John 2:1, or the High Priest of Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25, faithfully doing His work. In deep humility, thank Him, and in complete acknowledgment of your full awareness of the depth of your sinnerhood, in simple faith accept as a gift the wonderful provision of the cleansing His precious blood has provided. (I John 1:7)

## Chapter Five

### **PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS TOWARD FULFILLMENT OF LASTING JOY**

I John 4:1 - 5:12

Introduction: John finishes his active teaching of the main truths of I John in Chapter 4: 6. He follows this with several practical exhortations continuing at least through 5:12.

- [1] In I John chapter 3 John had gone (for the second time) through a series of evidences or assurances that we, indeed, *have* Eternal Life.
- [2] Those evidences are confirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit *abiding* in us. I John 3: 24-4:6.
- [3] The "capstone" of ALL of the evidences is that we have love for our brethren.

*(Special Note Of Interest)* We can summarize the Truths of I John in still another way:

- (1) In Chapters 1-3 we have *Divine Light* with the evidences that we are walking in it.
- (2) In Chapter 4 we have *Divine Love* and the Revelation and Inspiration of it.
- (3) In Chapter 5 we have *Divine Life*, the Possession and the confidence of it.

#### **I. EXHORTATIONS REGARDING LOVE OF THE BRETHREN.(4:7- 14)**

( Also: Compare 2: 7-11; 3:11-18) Love is the *ultimate* test of our *Union With God*. Please Note:

- a. It is a more vital test than *orthodoxy* !
- b. It is a more thorough test than the exercise of *faith as a principle* (I Cor. 13)
- A. Love's *source* is in the nature of God. (7.8) Up to this point other references to love have been in the form of a *duty*. But here since, as a believer one is *born of God*, Love is a *Divine Disposition!* Since this is true it forms the basis for three (3) reasons why believers ought to love one another:
  - 1. Believers are born of God. (vs. 7)
  - 2. Believers, therefore, share God's disposition. (vs. 8)
  - 3. Believers evidence therefore that they *know* God. (vs. 7)
- B. Love's *Manifestation* is in the Mission Of Christ. There are three (3) statements about the love of God that are displayed in His Mission.
  - 1. God *sent* His Son ---that we might live through Him - the *design* of His Incarnation. (vs. 9)
  - 2. God *sent* His Son as a propitiation (vs. 10) --the *fact* of the atonement.
  - 3. God *sent* His Son as the Savior of the world.--the *object* of His Mission!
- C. Love's *Consummation* - God's love *perfected* in us! ("exists" in us) (vs.12)
  - 1. The Father's own love beats in our breast to display His love to a lost world. This is more than mere imitation!
  - 2. God's very Love is consummated *through us!*

#### **II. EXHORTATIONS RELATING CHRISTIAN LOVE AND SAVING FAITH. I John**

**4: 15 - 5:1.**

## A. The Connection between Christian Love and Faith. (verses 15,16)

1. I John 3:23 reminded us that there is a two-fold token of our being a genuine Christian: That we "believe Him" (or *on* Him) with genuine trust, and, that we "love one another".
2. See Galatians 5:6 and the confirmation of the fact that Saving Faith expresses itself in Love. It is not whether we are a Jew or Gentile but what is vital and crucial is that our professed faith finds expression in genuine Love.
3. Faith *begets* love in God's children because it is faith *in* His love. (*we have known and believed the love that God hath to us*) (vs. 16). Faith lays hold of the love that is in God (note: "God is love" vs. 16) and reproduces (channels) that love through us!

## B. The relation of love to the subject of Judgment. (vs. 17, 18)

1. John had previously spoken (2:28) of the time when Christ would be "manifest", (i.e. at His Coming,) and he was concerned that we face that prospect with confidence and not be ashamed.
2. How, then, can we face this prospect with confidence? When God's love is *perfected with us!* vs. 17. His love is made *complete* among us when "our loving one another" results from His (Christ's) love of us. Love's circuit is complete, from God to us, from us to our brother, and through our brother back to God! The *end* (aim) of God's love to us is attained in our loving one-another.
3. This is proof of our oneness with Christ and gives us assurance and boldness when we contemplate standing in His presence. And all the more so when we realize the truth of our *identity* with Christ: "As He is (now) so are *we* in this world". vs. 17.
4. Since *fear* has to do with *punishment* and, because of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ (note the above statement), we have no fear when we think of meeting God. Anyone who still *fears* when he thinks of meeting God has not "believed (vs. 16) the love God hath to us"

C. The *identity* of love to God and love to men. ( vs. 19 - 21)

1. We *love* ("Him" is the copyists error) because He first loved us. We have caught the spirit, we have learned the art of love from God's love to ourselves in Christ.
2. The initiative in this whole process of our loving one another started with God himself. vs. 4:10
3. Anyone who professes to be a part of this whole process - this circuitous\_route of Love *from* God to man, *through* man to others, *from* others back to God - and hates his brother is a *liar* and a *hypocrite* !

**III. EXHORTATIONS ENCOURAGING AN ALL - CONQUERING FAITH. ( I John 5: 1 - 12)**

## A. The specific object of an all-conquering faith is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (5:1,4,5)

1. Because of being born-again, true believers acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We need to explain further:
  - a. Already in John's day, the truth as to who Jesus was, was under attack.
  - b. The "Doketists" before the close of the first century were teaching that, at the

- human Jesus' baptism, the "Christ" (in spirit) came upon Him to minister until His death at Calvary - at which time "the Christ" left Him. ( I John 4:2 ff.)
- c. At the same time, the Gnostics were teaching that our Lord's earthly and human career were an "illusion of the senses". For this reason John, throughout his Epistles affirms who Jesus was. (4: 2,14, 15; II John 7,9)
  - d. (Let me quote George G. Findlay in "*Fellowship In the Life Eternal*" ) --"let me believe with all my heart that the "man" who lived the life of Jesus and died an atoning death upon the Cross is "one with" and is in fact the Almighty God; life and the world are changed to me the moment I so believe."
- B. What are the *marks* of this "all-conquering" faith? Ans. - We walk by *love* and we walk by *rule* (or discipline). (5: 2,3)
1. (vs. 4: 19) "We love (*him*, is a copyist's mistake) because He first loved us". See Gal. 5:6; Faith works by love.
    - a. Love is the primary evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. (Gal. 5:22)
    - b. Again, we came to know love by Christ's demonstration of it. (I John 3:16)
  2. We are disciplined to *keep His Word*. ( 5: 2,3) - and - *to overcome the world*.
    - a. In overcoming the world there is involved the discipline of "loving not the world" as in 2:15-17
- C. An "All-Conquering Faith" accepts God's testimony ( the word used in our text for "testimony" is *witness!*) (Vs. 5: 5-12)
1. There is first of all an *external witness* - that is, it is objective (outside of my personal experience). (5: 5-9)
    - a. This witness is regarding God's Son, Jesus Christ (vs. 5), - and- the One who affirms and gives confirmation to that witness, the Holy Spirit of God. (vs. 6)
    - b. The witness is to the fact that Jesus "*came*". This is an historical fact. ( vs. 6) *How* He came is matter of difference of opinion. Bible teachers give a possibility of three (3) opinions.
      - (1). That his coming by *water* and by *blood* refers to His baptism by John the Baptist and to the Cross. (*In my opinion, most likely*)  
( Note: His baptism was the beginning of His Messianic Ministry. (John 1:31; Acts 1:22; Matt. 3:15)
      - (2). Others link the water and blood to the two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
      - (3). Still others link it to the piercing of His Side by one of the soldiers - "*forthwith came there out blood and water*" John 19: 34.
    - c. Thus, in addition to the water and the blood, the Holy Spirit is the *third* witness. In verse 6, the Holy Spirit is mentioned as coming *last* in order of historical appearance, but, in verse 8, He is *first* in order of importance.
      - (1). Note, first, in verse 6 his witness is a continuous one. The word, "*beareth*" is in the present tense.
      - (2). These three witnesses, therefore, are a continuing testimony to the

Person and Work of Jesus Christ. (5:8)

- (a) The Spirit witnesses to the person of Christ in his manifestation to His disciples in the Upper Room
  - (b) The blood witnesses to the manifestation of Christ as a substitute for sinners at Calvary
  - (c) The water witnesses to the manifestation of Christ as the Son of God on the banks of the Jordan - (when baptized by John - "This is my beloved Son etc")
- (3). And these three *agree in one*.
2. There is also an *Internal Witness* of the Spirit,(vs. 9) "The witness of God is Greater!"--it is *subjective* - i.e. it is experienced personally, inwardly.
- a. The *condition* necessary for receiving this witness: " He that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself" ( 5:10a) That which for others is only external is for the believer personal and experiential. That which was objective is now subjective!
  - b. There is a *crisis* met by every individual confronted with this witness. (5:10b) " He that believeth not has made Him a liar"
  - c. The *content* of this internal witness is found in 5:11,12.
    - (1). Eternal Life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath Life!

*This is the mountain peak of John's revelation in this Epistle !*

## Chapter Six: Final Conclusions

- [1] With verse 12 of John's 5th chapter he has finished the basic teaching of this Epistle. He now goes on to provide a summary of what he has written.
- a. Three times before, in retrospect, he had written "I have written" (2:13 -14, 21 and 26.
  - b. His purpose in writing was stated in the *present* tense at the beginning of this Epistle ( 1:4) "These things we write unto you, etc."; now, in 5:13, he writes in the *past* tense, "These things have I written, etc."
  - c. Now his survey (in retrospect) covers the whole Epistle (5:13)
- [2] In summary, this is what he has taught us; that God, through grace, in the Person of His own Son has:
- settled the sin question !
  - purged the believer from the guilt of sin!
  - empowered him for deliverance from the dominion of sin !
  - united him with the Family of God, in which family he grows from spiritual childhood to spiritual maturity,
  - empowered him to overcome the sinful nature in its effort to gain the ascendancy in his personal life.

*Four clearly defined lines of truth open up to us in this concluding paragraph:*

- A. John reviews the difference between *faith* and the *assurance of faith* ! (or), Being certain that you have Eternal Life. (The NAS version of 5:13 is probably most correct: "*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son Of God, in order that you may know that you have Eternal Life*")
  - I. There is a vast difference between having professed to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and positively knowing that I have the life He promised.
  - II. Many 'believers' are convinced that one can only come to *know* this when you die !
- B. This positive Christian Assurance takes effect in a life of prevailing prayer! (Vs. 14, 15)
  - I. The reason that the subject of prayer comes up in this paragraph is that the Apostle John wants the believer's positive assurance ( his "knowing") to be coupled together and yoked with service.
    1. The clear inference is that if my "joy is full"( I John 1:4) and if I have this "full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10: 22), I will be motivated to share with others in the interest of their souls; if they are lost, to reach them, and if they are saved, to minister to their varied needs !
  - II. Service for Jesus Christ ( e.g. Rom. 12:1) to be effective, begins with a ministry of *intercession* !
    1. "The knowledge of eternal life translates itself into that confidence towards God which asks and receives for the Church, and for a sin-stricken world, the great gifts of redeeming grace".---George G. Findlay in "Life Of The Eternal"
    2. Many pledges are given by our Lord in His parting words in the Upper Room to induce us to pray. (John 14: 13,14; 15:7 - [look them up] )
      - a. [note] - With regard to *asking* "according to His will" in the above verses;



*"Abiding fellowship with Jesus Christ, as of "the branches" with "the Vine", was to bring His people into such a knowledge of God and accordance with His will , into such access to the springs of power in the being of the Godhead, that **strength for Christ's service would never fail them!**" - from "Fellowship In The Life Eternal" pg.417, George G. Findlay*

- C. The case of erring brethren calls for the *special* intervention of Christian prayer ! (vs. 16, 17)
- I. According to Rev. 1:6, believers are made "*Priests unto God*" and, in their prayer-life, are to be co-advocates ( I John 2:1) in beseeching God on behalf of fellow-believers who sin not unto death. (See Gal. 6:1)
  - II. Seeing a "brother" who sins, we understand to be a believer.
  - III. The kind of death about which John is talking, we take to mean *physical death!* So that the "life" the text is talking about is also physical. ( See I Cor. 11: 30,31,32 - where the "sleep" mentioned in vs. 30 is physical death)
  - IV. Since (in vs. 17) "all unrighteousness" is sin, and since the article (a) in the last half of the verse should not be there and thus does not refer to one **particular** sin, the verse is really saying: *if the erring brother's sin is not unto death by God's chastening hand, he may be restored* ( no threat of death hanging over his head) *through the intercession of praying brethren*.
  - V. We still have one left-over problem (!) - the "sin unto death" of vs. 16? The explanation given above satisfies me. But if it could refer to "spiritual" death, I would concur with those who see it to be unbelief in its darkest form of wilful, total rejection of Christ.
- D. The Concluding Apostolic Creed And Testimony Given by the last survivor of the Twelve Apostles, the Apostle John: The Three (3) "I Know's" !
- I. "I Believe In Holiness" -vs. 18.-"*Whosoever is Begotten of God does not sin*"
  - II. " I Believe in Regeneration" vs. 19. - To be "of God" (as the Authorized Version reads) is to have been born again.
  - III. " I Believe In the Incarnation." Vs. 20. Perfect "Holiness ( I,above), and "conscious Sonship to God" ( II, above) begin with the personal knowledge that the Son of God has come (in incarnation).

*"Little Children, keep yourselves from idols" Vs. 21*

(Supplement to "Conscious Possession "- Chapter Four)

THE INADMISSIBILITY OF SIN

Introduction:

A secondary interpretation of I John 1:9 opens the door for an "easy" remedy for careless living so that *consciously and repeatedly sinning* may become a "practice"! Whereas the *true* believer does not live in the *practice* of sin! Is this Scripturally true?

We are going to discuss the whole paragraph of Chapter 3: 4 - 10 test, the truth of *THE INADMISSIBILITY OF SIN*.

( *Four Reasons For Not Living In The Practice Of Sin*)

I. The True Believer Purifies Himself !

(*What brought up the whole subject was the Biblical truth of I John 3:3 - which analyzed is:*)

A. Every true believer lives in the expectancy of the imminent return of Christ - *HE HAS THIS HOPE IN HIM* (Christ)

DISCUSS: What is the hope of the Christian ?

B. Every true believer is in the process of dealing with sin in such a way that in *no way possible way* could it be construed that he is living in the practice of sin. It is *impossible for true followers of Christ to acquiese* (plan to live purposefully) *in sin - of any kind ! HE PURIFIES HIMSELF.*

C. His inward motivation for this is a *living relationship to* ( a sharing in the very life of) *one who is himself perfectly pure. EVEN AS HE IS PURE.*

**DISCUSSION ON "IMPECCABILITY OF CHRIST"**

1. Meaning ? Impossible for Christ to sin.
2. Wrong view !  
 Jesus had the capacity to sin, but did not do so. If it were impossible for Jesus to do otherwise, his temptations were not real. He played a part which was a sham.
3. If Christ, in His human nature, was capable of sinning, then the following would be true:
  - a. His mother was stained with the sin of unchastity.
  - b. He was the seed of the man and not the seed of the woman.
  - c. He was an illegitimate child.
  - d. He was reduced to the level of a natural man.
  - e. He was not the second person of the Trinity.

## II. Sin Is Lawlessness. Vs. 4.

- A. Sin in its real character is revolt against the Holy Will Of God - it is to assert one's own will as a rule of action against the Will of God - it is a deliberate rejection of God's standard and resorting to one's own desires - this is Lawlessness.
- B. This is not a statement about one *act* or one *attitude* or another as being sin in particular, but it is to set up as a rule of life one's *own* will instead of the absolutely good will of God.
  1. Therefore, the person who continues in that character is not a child of God.
  2. One of the marks of a true child of God is that he is free from the rule of sin - he is not characterized as *Lawless* !

III. Sin Is "Un-Christian" - It Is *Inadmissible* ! ( I John 3:5-7)

- A. To the pagan world of John's day, the problem of sin and consciousness of sinning did not enter into their thinking. They did not know about a God "*in whom there was no darkness at all*" - a God , in fact, who was *light* ! ( 1:5)
- B. That's why John says, "Ye know that He was manifested to take away sins." (vs 5)
- C. In taking away sin ( see notes, top of page 40), He dealt not only with our *guilt* - but indwelling sin that is in us, that is against and fights holiness.  
 [Note] "Herein lies the completeness of Christ's redemption. The cross destroys both the guilt and the *power* of sin" --George G. Findlay- "Studies In John's Epistles"  
 [Note] This is how the logic goes;  
 If He is sinless and came for the express purpose of abolishing sin, if Christ and sin are incompatible, then to *harbor sin* is to dissociate oneself from Christ and give evidence that his profession has never been genuine.
- D. Since the "above" is true, *no one who abides in Him* (vs. 6) (*sharing His nature*) can *live in the practice of sin* ! - Luke 11:23 "He that is not with Me is against Me" - also - III John 11. "He that practiceth evil hath not seen God". ( Read carefully vs. 6 & 7)

## IV. Sin Is Diabolical (of the devil) - verses 8 - 10

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION OF  
I JOHN 3: 4-10

*Of The Many Interpretations, here are 3 of the most prominent*  
(Commentary by Dr. Simon J. Kistemaker)

First: John writes as a Pastor to his people and calls them to confess their sins. (1:8-10). But he also holds before them the ideal that all those who are born of God cannot sin. This, however, represents an ideal, not reality.

Next: We should distinguish between different kinds of sin: deliberate sin (5:16,17) and involuntary sins; mortal sins and insignificant sins; and the sin of refusing to believe in Jesus over against the believer's temporary lapse into sin. Nevertheless, in the sight of God every sin is a transgression of his Law. (James 2:9-11)

Last: With his characteristic twofold approach, John describes the person who persistently sins because he is in the power of the evil one and the Christian who sometimes may fall into sin, but cannot sin persistently. In expressing this thought, John uses Greek verbs in the present tense that indicate continual action (for instance, "he cannot go on sinning [3:9]). Many commentators have adopted this approach as a plausible interpretation.